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Green bonfire as PM rows back on net zero targets



▲ *Rishi Sunak announces Britain's watered-down net zero targets. 'It's not about politics,' he said*
PHOTOGRAPH: JUSTIN TALLIS/AFP/GETTY

Sunak's attempt to close poll gap with Labour triggers condemnation

Pippa Crerar
Fiona Harvey
Kiran Stacey

Rishi Sunak announced a U-turn on the government's climate commitments yesterday as he promised to put his government on a more radical path in an attempt to close the gap on Labour before the general election.

In one of his biggest policy reversals since taking office, Sunak confirmed the UK would push back the deadline for selling new petrol and diesel cars and the phasing out of gas boilers, prompting furious condemnation from the automotive and energy industries. Some senior Tories, led by Boris Johnson, criticised the decision, with the former prime minister warning his successor that he "cannot afford to falter now" as heaping uncertainty on businesses could drive up prices for British families.

The changes were met with despair by climate scientists and environmental experts who said costs to consumers would rise in the long run and the UK's global leadership on the issue was at risk. The former US vice-president Al Gore said Sunak was "doing the wrong thing".

At a Downing Street press conference, Sunak insisted that his scaling down of climate policies was "not about the politics", even though the Conservatives' conference slogan adorned the lectern and party insiders said the move was about creating dividing lines with Labour before the next election. The prime minister said he was "absolutely unequivocal" about sticking to the commitment to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050 but wanted to take a "more pragmatic, proportionate and realistic approach". However, he set out little detail on what measures he would now bring in to help meet that target.

> ***'This is an act of weakness from a desperate, directionless prime minister'***
>
> **Ed Miliband** *Labour energy spokesperson*

Environmental groups are expected to challenge the decision to water down the commitments in court as the government has a legal obligation to set out precisely how it will meet its 2050 target with clear carbon budgets for different sectors.

Sunak said he was trying to "bring the country along with us" and save families thousands of pounds by delaying the green pledges. Yet businesses and environmental experts have warned that his plans could end up costing them more in the long run.

Sunak billed his approach as a middle road between those who want far tougher climate action and those who do not believe humans are causing climate change at all, adding that the UK was

4 →

Almost all Europeans breathing toxic air

Matthew Taylor
Pamela Duncan

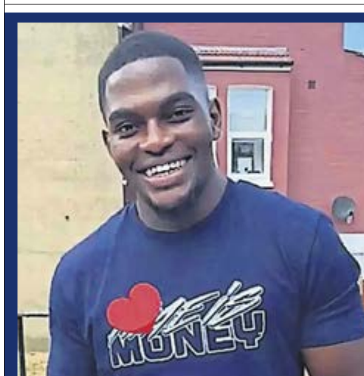
Europe is facing a "severe public health crisis", with almost everyone across the continent living in areas with dangerous levels of air pollution, a Guardian investigation has found.

Analysis of data gathered using cutting-edge methodology – including detailed satellite images and measurements from more than 1,400 ground monitoring stations – reveals a dire picture of dirty air, with 98% of people living in areas with highly damaging fine particulate pollution that exceeds World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines. Almost two-thirds live in areas where air quality is more than double the limit.

The worst-hit country in Europe is North Macedonia. Almost two-thirds of people there live in areas with more than four times the WHO guidelines for PM2.5, while four areas were found to have air pollution almost six times the figure, including in its capital, Skopje.

Eastern Europe is significantly worse than western Europe, apart from Italy, where more than a third of those living in the Po valley and surrounding areas in

8 →



Killing of Chris Kaba
Met officer charged with murder over fatal shooting in car

News *Page 2* →

VISIT…

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Inside *21/09/23*
Four sections every day

News and Sport

Social attitudes
Britons show their 40-year embrace of more liberal values
Page 17

Journal Outside G2
Opinions and ideas

With Sunak's party in trouble, the planet never stood a chance
Martin Kettle
Page 1

G2 Centre pullout
Features and arts

Making a killing
Oliver Wainwright visits the 'supermarket of death': Europe's biggest arms fair
Page 8

Save up to 34% with a subscription to the Guardian and the Observer
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Weather
Page 32

Quick crossword
Back of G2

Cartoon
Journal, page 4

Cryptic crossword
Back of Journal

Contact

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News



'He had a bright future ahead of him … Our family must see justice for Chris'

Statement by Kaba's relatives

Protesters outside New Scotland Yard this month, marking the first anniversary of Chris Kaba's death
PHOTOGRAPH: GUY BELL/SHUTTERSTOCK

Met firearms officer charged with murder over shooting of Chris Kaba

Sammy Gecsoyler

A Metropolitan police firearms officer was charged yesterday with the murder of Chris Kaba, who was shot dead last year in south London.

The officer, who is known publicly only as NX121 at this stage, will appear before central London magistrates today.

The Crown Prosecution Service announced the charge yesterday.

Kaba, 24, was killed by a single gunshot on 5 September 2022 in Streatham, south London. He was in a dark Audi car, which came to a halt and was boxed in by police.

In a statement, Kaba's family said: "Chris was so very loved by our family and all his friends.

"He had a bright future ahead of him, but his life was cut short. Our family and our wider community must see justice for Chris.

"We welcome this charging decision, which could not have come too soon. Now we await the trial of the firearms officer without delay and hope and pray that justice will be served."

In March, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) said it had referred a file of evidence to the CPS after finishing its homicide investigation.

Rosemary Ainslie, the head of the CPS special crime division, said: "Following a thorough review of the evidence provided by the IOPC, the CPS has authorised a charge of murder against a Metropolitan police officer following the death of Chris Kaba. The CPS reminds all concerned that criminal proceedings against the officer are active and that he has the right to a fair trial.

"It is extremely important there should be no reporting, commentary or sharing of information online which could in any way prejudice these proceedings."

The IOPC's acting director of operations, Amanda Rowe, said: "Today the Crown Prosecution Service has announced that a Metropolitan police service officer will appear in court tomorrow charged with the murder of Chris Kaba, following an investigation by the Independent Office for Police Conduct.

"The officer and Mr Kaba's family were notified of the decision by the CPS this morning. The officer, who we are unable to name for legal reasons at this time, will be appearing at the Westminster magistrates court tomorrow morning.

"Our thoughts remain with Mr Kaba's family and everyone affected by this tragic incident.

"It's important now that criminal proceedings are able to run their course. We would reiterate the importance of not reporting, commenting or sharing information online which could in any way prejudice those proceedings."

One of Tory party's biggest ever donors profited from £135m of contracts with NHS

Rowena Mason
Whitehall editor

One of the Conservatives' biggest ever donors has profited from £135m of contracts with the Department of Health and Social Care in under four years.

Frank Hester, a tech entrepreneur whose company supplies computer systems to the NHS, gave Rishi Sunak's party £5m this month - the joint biggest donation to the Tories in decades.

His company, the Phoenix Partnership (TPP), paid out more than £20m in dividends between 2019 and 2022, with Hester the only shareholder.

The group supplies software to about 2,700 GP surgeries in England as well as services to allow them to hold digital medical records.

Its main operating company, the Phoenix Partnership (Leeds), recorded a turnover of £75m, with profit before tax of £47m in the year to March 2022, Companies House documents show. It paid dividends during the year of £10m to its parent company, which is ultimately owned by Hester, and a salary of £515,000 to him, its sole director.

Over a period of four years from 2019 to 2022, the ultimate parent company, TPP Group, paid out £23.5m in dividends, which appear to have gone to Hester as its only shareholder. Contracts with the DHSC appear to make up a large proportion of TPP's business. TPP said it did not wish to comment about its business with the NHS and dividend payments to Hester.

Last year, Hester wrote an open letter to the NHS saying: "We are here to help. Not to drive profits for shareholders, or to grease revolving doors."

The scale of business that Hester and TPP has with the NHS was uncovered by the Good Law Project, which found payments totalling £137m to the company since the start of the Covid pandemic in April 2020, largely under the GP IT Futures framework.

Jo Maugham, the director of the Good Law Project, said: "Once you see how much Mr Hester gets from an NHS that is desperately starved of money, you can understand why he is so committed to the government that lets him."

Hester is listed on the Sunday Times Rich List with an estimated wealth of £415m. He was made an OBE in 2015. TPP has met government figures three times since July 2021, including Steve Barclay, the health secretary.

Writing in the Telegraph when he made his £5m donation, Hester said: "As a businessman from Yorkshire I have been fortunate enough to have met the prime minister. He shares my passion for harnessing the data revolution to transform the way we as citizens access healthcare."



Frank Hester donated £5m to the Conservative party this month

Earlier this year, it was reported that TPP had been awarded a £150,000 contract with the UK Health and Security Agency about seven months before the company donated £150,000 to the Tories. A correction was later issued to say the donation came from Hester rather than TPP, which is "unequivocally apolitical".

TPP was the subject of controversy in 2018 when it failed to inform NHS Digital that 150,000 patients had opted out of sharing their medical data, resulting in their information being shared by mistake.

At the time, Jackie Doyle-Price, a health minister, said it was a "supplier defect in the processing of historical patient objections to the sharing of their confidential health data" and that TPP had "apologised unreservedly for its role in this matter and has committed to work with NHS Digital so that errors of this nature do not occur again". The government stressed there had not been any risk to patient care.

TPP declined to comment about its work with the NHS. The DHSC was also approached for comment.

Tale of teapot's escape from British Museum goes viral across China







Amy Hawkins
Senior China correspondent

Despite diplomatic divergences, the one thing the UK and China can surely agree on is their shared love of tea.

As a result, sinophiles may be disappointed to hear that a Chinese internet series about a lost teapot, which critiques the legacy of British colonialism, is a viral hit in east Asia.

Escape from the British Museum, which emerged on the Chinese version of TikTok, is the story of a magical teapot that turns into a woman in order to escape captivity in London and return to its homeland. The plot of the series, made by two social media influencers, echoes Chinese state media calls for Britain to make amends for "historical sins" and return Chinese cultural relics.

Since being published two weeks ago on Douyin - which, like TikTok, is owned by the Chinese developer ByteDance and hosts short-form, user-submitted videos - the series has racked up more than 370m views.

The influencers, known as Pancake Fruit and Summer Sister, have 7.67 million and 4.67 million followers respectively. Pancake Fruit said they had got the idea for the series from another blogger and had not heard about the recent scandal involving stolen items from the British Museum when writing the script.

On Friday, a notice was filed with the China Film Administration to make an animated, full-length version of Escape from the British Museum. It is not clear if Pancake Fruit and Summer Sister are involved. According to the summary, the film tells the story of Chinese cultural relics that have been in the museum for more than 100 years. They wake up "on the eve of spring festival" and "escape from the British Museum because they miss their motherland and return to China for the new year".

In the Douyin series, which seems to have been filmed in Edinburgh, the jade teapot appears to be based on an artefact created in 2011 by Yu Ting, a craftsperson from Suzhou who specialises in translucent, eggshell-thin jade carvings. Yu sold the teapot to the British Museum in 2017.

▶ The series tells the story of a jade teapot that is transformed into a woman in order to escape from the British Museum and return to China. It is now being made into a full-length film



▲ The teapot on which the series was based was actually created in 2011 and sold to the museum by its maker

In August the Global Times, a Chinese state tabloid, called for "the British Museum to return all Chinese cultural relics acquired through improper channels to China free of charge". It cited the revelation that an estimated 1,500 artefacts were missing from the museum's collection, with some appearing on eBay.

The museum said the stolen items did not include Chinese artefacts. "The British Museum has a long history of cultural collaboration in China, which has resulted in a number of important exhibitions, partnerships and research projects," a spokesperson said. "It is committed to exhibiting its Chinese collections, here at the British Museum, and across the world through our collection-sharing programmes.

"The museum believes that displaying objects from China alongside cultural material from other parts of the world helps people understand China's long history better. We have received no official request for the return of any objects in the collection by the Chinese government."

The spokesperson said: "We would emphasise the jade teapot in the collection is not an historical object and similar modern items are available for purchase in China today."

Although state media has promoted a nationalist line and accused the British Museum of harbouring "stolen cultural property", Chinese social media users are divided.

"Cultural artefacts were lost because the Chinese government was corrupt and the nation was weak at the time," wrote one Weibo user.

Another replied: "There were more cultural artefacts destroyed during the Cultural Revolution than being stored by the British Museum, it is beyond your imagination."

Additional research **Tau Yang**

'How is he still alive?': Murdoch's rising hatred of Trump revealed

Martin Pengelly
Washington

Rupert Murdoch loathes Donald Trump so much that the media tycoon has not just soured on him as a presidential candidate but often wishes for his death, the author Michael Wolff writes in his eagerly awaited new book, The Fall: The End of Fox News and the Murdoch Dynasty.

According to Wolff, Murdoch has become "a frothing-at-the-mouth" enemy of the 77-year-old former US president, often voicing thoughts including "This would all be solved if … " and "How could he still be alive, how could he?"

The Fall will be published in the US on Tuesday. The Guardian obtained a copy.

Wolff has written three books about Trump - Fire and Fury, Siege and Landslide - and one about Murdoch, The Man Who Owns the News. In his second Murdoch book, he says he may be "the journalist not in his employ who knows [Murdoch] best".

Wolff also describes his source material as "conversations specifically for this book, and other conversations that have taken place over many years … scenes and events that I have personally witnessed or that I have recreated with the help of participants in them".

After Trump entered US politics in 2015, winning the White House the following year, he, along with an increasingly extreme Republican party, Fox News and other properties in Murdoch's rightwing media empire formed a symbiotic relationship.

But Murdoch, 92, has long been reported to have soured on Trump - a process which, according to Wolff, led to Murdoch personally endorsing the Fox News call of Arizona for Joe Biden on election night in 2020 that fuelled Trump's campaign of lies about voter fraud, culminating in the deadly January 6 attack on Congress.

By the beginning of this year, Wolff writes, what Murdoch "adamantly didn't want … was Trump. Of all Trump's implacable enemies, Murdoch had become a frothing-at-the-mouth one."



▲ Murdoch, left, now detests Trump, according to Michael Wolff's book

After Trump left office, Wolff writes, Murdoch "like much of the Republican establishment … had convinced himself that Trump was, finally, vulnerable."

As an election year nears, Trump appears to be in rude political health.

Notwithstanding 91 criminal charges - for state and federal election subversion, retention of classified information and hush-money payments - and assorted civil cases, Trump is the clear favourite to win the Republican nomination to face Biden for the White House again.

Green bonfire as Sunak rows back on net zero targets for cars and boilers

Continued from page 1

already ahead of other countries in taking action. "I've got an opportunity to change things and what I don't want to do is make yet more short-term decisions, easy ways out and ultimately not be straight with the country about what those mean for them," he said. "If we continue down this path, we risk losing the consent of the British people. The resulting backlash would not just be against specific policies but against the wider mission itself, meaning we might never achieve our goal."

However, polls have consistently shown the majority of people back the transition to net zero in order to limit climate change, although that support starts to wane if costs are piled on consumers.

Sunak indicated that the net zero announcement was the first of several big consumer-focused policy shifts he is expected to outline in the coming weeks as he attempts to set out his vision for the country and boost the Tories' poor poll ratings.

"This is just the start. What we begin today is bigger than any single policy or issue. We are going to change the way our politics works. We won't take the easy way out. There will be resistance, and we will meet it," he said.

Labour condemned the plan and sought to use the speech to link Sunak with his predecessor, Liz Truss, who called on the government to row



▲ The business secretary, Kemi Badenoch, at the announcement

back on green commitments just days ago. Ed Miliband, the shadow energy secretary, said: "This is an act of weakness from a desperate, directionless prime minister, dancing to the tune of a small minority of his party. Liz Truss crashed the economy and Rishi Sunak is trashing our economic future."

But the party admits it will not fully restore the targets now junked by the government. Shadow ministers say they will bring back the 2030 deadline to phase out petrol and diesel cars, but will not restore the targets to eliminate gas boilers.

"Labour isn't going to put people's bills up," said Steve Reed, the shadow environment secretary.

Sunak's announcement came after a chaotic 24 hours, during which details of his planned speech were leaked, causing him to bring it forward hours and call an emergency cabinet meeting to sign off the plan.

The most significant rollback is a delay to the deadline for phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars, from 2030 to 2035, in line with other European nations, with those vehicles still allowed to be sold secondhand after that date.

Sunak also announced a delay to the target for eliminating the sale of gas boilers to homes. Under his new policy, homeowners will have to replace gas boilers with electric heat pumps only when they are replacing their boilers anyway.

Boiler upgrade grants will be doubled to £7,500 and many homes will be exempt from the demand altogether. Energy efficiency targets for landlords will also be scrapped, along with planned insulation requirements for homeowners.

Sunak also said there would be no new taxes to discourage flying or eating meat – even though neither are government policy – and ruled out recycling schemes with multiple bins or compulsory car-sharing.

The government's claim that the UK has done better than other countries on cutting emissions is based on decarbonisation decades ago, not under the current government.

Emissions cuts are measured from 1990, and the UK's dash for gas, which displaced coal for power generation in the 1990s and 2000s, delivered the lion's share of the roughly 50% fall in carbon since. Under this government, while emissions from power generation have continued to fall, emissions from transport, homes and farming have stayed stubbornly high.



Fuel poverty
PM 'putting landlords over low-income tenants'

Patrick Butler
Social policy editor

Low-income tenants will face higher energy bills as a result of the government's decision to scrap plans to force private landlords to upgrade their properties to make them more energy efficient, experts have warned.

The requirement for landlords to meet stricter energy efficiency standards was dropped by Rishi Sunak yesterday when he announced the scrapping or delay of a range of green measures he said imposed a direct costs on consumers.

Analysts and campaigners said the plans would not help most low income families, especially private renters struggling with the cost of living crisis. One estimate had put the cost in higher energy bills to private renters of just a two-year delay in energy efficiency targets at £1bn.

Scrapping higher energy efficiency standards in private rented homes was expected to have the most impact on low income households. According to the 2021 census 5m households were renting privately in England and Wales alone, with this form of tenure expanding massively over the past two decades, up from 1.9m in 2001.

Minimum energy efficiency regulations in the private rented sector have been in place since 2018 but in 2021 the government proposed stricter standards in new tenancies from 2025 and in all tenancies from 2028, with landlords who fail to upgrade their properties facing fines. These have now been scrapped.

Around 2.4m private rented properties do not meet those scrapped stricter standards. Nearly a quarter of private rented homes are classified as "non decent" homes, with 11% reported as having problems with damp. Around a quarter of private renters live in fuel poverty.

Dame Clare Moriarty, chief executive of Citizens Advice, said net-zero policies were a key part of the solution to the cost-of-living crisis. "The government's decision to row back on these policies will particularly hurt renters, leaving millions of tenants across the country facing needlessly high bills through the winters ahead," she said.

Rachelle Earwaker, senior economist at Joseph Rowntree Foundation said: "Tenants, who have seen their energy prices skyrocket in the past year … may think the prime minister is more concerned about their landlord's pocket above all."

Simon Francis, coordinator of the End Fuel Poverty Coalition, said changes to the energy efficiency of private rented homes would lead to higher bills for tenants: "People living in cold, damp homes will be aghast that Rishi Sunak is playing politics with measures which will help keep them warm every winter."

Peter Chalkley, director of the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit thinktank said: "The one measure that would have brought down bills is the landlord energy efficiency rules.

"Rented accommodation is some of the worst quality and so most costly to heat with tenants having no power to insulate themselves. These measures will add to the cost of living for those struggling, not make things easier."

'Not about the politics'
Major policy shift was planned, claim insiders

Rowena Mason
Pippa Crerar
Kiran Stacey
Helena Horton

Isaac Levido, the strategy guru behind Boris Johnson's 2019 victory, has spent much of the summer working on the overhaul of Rishi Sunak's green policies.

One of the goals has been to find that elusive dividing line with Labour that Tory strategists believe will present voters with a clear choice at next year's election.

Sunak's pitch over the coming months will be that he is saving "hard-pressed families from unacceptable costs" of green policies, while trying to present Labour as piling them on.

With the prime minister's electoral options narrowing, there is a desire to attack the opposition's planned £28bn of spending on the transition to net zero. Sources close to the discussions in No 10 over the past few weeks say this strategy gained traction after the Uxbridge byelection, when the Tories narrowly held on.

Tory advisers could see voter opposition to the Ulez tax on high emission vehicles in London – though the final decision to delay the move to electric vehicles and non-gas boilers was taken far more recently. But No 10 sources insist the U-turn was not about pursuit of short-term political advantage. "This is not about the politics," Sunak claimed in his speech.

His advisers insist Sunak has been mulling the U-turn for a long



◀ Climate activists make their feelings known near Downing Street yesterday as Rishi Sunak prepared to rewrite his administration's climate policies after years of near political consensus

PHOTOGRAPH: SUSANNAH IRELAND/ REUTERS

time, and that he was considering a shift even before Uxbridge. No 10 insiders say Sunak ordered the net zero review before the summer break because he was not convinced all the measures on cars and boilers were cost effective and needed to hit the UK's 2050 targets.

Levido, who is expected to play a major role in Sunak's election campaign next year, has had the task of working on the political messaging. The direction of travel was also set when Claire Coutinho, a former adviser to Sunak who became an MP in 2019, was elevated to the role of energy secretary in this month's reshuffle.

And since the start of the autumn term, the political operation in No 10 has had a shake-up with Jamie Njoku-Goodwin and Adam Atashzai joining about two weeks ago. Both were set to work on sharpening the political messaging around the change in policy and Sunak's landmark speech.

Senior advisers within Downing Street felt the narrative around net zero for the Tories had been too woolly and the new shift would stress Sunak was prepared to confront tricky choices on behalf of consumers - though campaigners warn it could cost some of the poorest even more.

One source with knowledge of the discussion at No 10 said the decision to delay the petrol and diesel ban in particular had proved finely balanced, with worries about the reaction of business. One Tory insider said: "Not everybody [at No 10] is 100% sure this is the wisest thing to do. Nobody is actively opposed but there is some nervousness about it." They also said this was very much Sunak's own project. "Rishi is obviously of a Treasury mindset and the Treasury has always been sceptical of these targets," they said.

Many Tories on the right were delighted by the news. Jacob Rees-Mogg, the former business secretary, told the Guardian he had been pushing for this for a long time. "I think the measures are extremely sensible and it is what I was arguing for during my brief time as energy secretary - that we need a sensitive net zero that takes the cost of living on board," he said.

The wealth of voices on the other side - Tories such as Johnson and Alok Sharma, opposition parties, businesses, climate experts - show the risks of Sunak's chosen path.

Labour is likely to seize on the idea that Sunak's choice has put him on Liz Truss's side and portray him as - like her - prone to policies that alarm business and endanger the economy. "The calculation is that it is worth the knock for the electoral advantage of creating a dividing line," the Tory insider said. "Businesses don't vote and the consumer element is a big part of it.

"Ultimately the decision was: this is what the PM personally feels, plus we can create a dividing line with Labour. That may be right on this particular policy, but the question is how do voters feel about the government changing its mind? The Conservatives like to paint Starmer as the flip-flopper but this blunts that attack."



▲ Political strategist Isaac Levido has been working on policy overhaul

Sketch
John Crace



RishGPT sells his soul for a chance to cling to power in breathtaking display of dishonesty

You could sense the panic when news was leaked of Rishi Sunak's plans to water down some of his climate change targets. Instead of a controlled speech later in the week we got a hastily arranged press conference. In the very same Downing Street media centre where No 10 staff had joked about having illegal parties during the pandemic. Call it karma. Stay calm and carry on taking the piss out of the country.

And breathe. Sunak strode into the room and stood in front of a lectern with "Long-term decisions for a brighter future" printed on the front. Gaslighting the country again. It's getting to be a habit. He then opened his mouth. RishGPT can't really help the entitled, nasal whine. But this time it came soaked in contempt. This wasn't just patronising, it was the most cynical speech from a prime minister in years. Deep down Sunak must know he has sold his soul for the chance of remaining in office a while longer. The dishonesty was breathtaking. He lied and lied and lied.

"People are frustrated with politics," Sunak began. They were fed up with the short-termism. So he was here to deliver change. Only he wasn't. The whole point of his speech was a short-term gain. To try to revive his standing in the polls with voters he imagines don't much care about climate change. To at least give him a shout in the election he's sure to lose. Here he was pushing back net zero targets for 2030, safe in the knowledge that he and his family will be safely back in California long before that.

> *This wasn't just patronising, it was the most cynical speech from a prime minister in years ... he lied and lied and lied*

So RishGPT had news for the country. It was time for us to do climate change lite. Just the bits we wanted. There was no need to go the whole hog. It was like this. The UK had always led the world in meeting its climate change obligations. So we could afford to ease up a bit. More than that, it was our duty. It wasn't British to show up other countries. What we needed to do was give everyone else a chance to catch up. That way everyone would be happy.

So here was the deal. Don't worry about your gas boilers for the foreseeable. Don't worry about your petrol and diesel cars till 2035. If then. Perhaps another government would move back the deadline to 2040 soon. Don't bother to insulate your homes. And, yes, he was so, so on the side of working people who couldn't afford green policies. That's why he was happy for them to remain in fuel poverty. That would teach renters to learn to afford their own properties.

There was a smattering of applause from a few captive ministers who had been kidnapped for the occasion before Sunak took a few questions from the mostly neutral or friendly audience. Mostly he held it together even as he repeated his lies but the mask slipped when the Guardian's Pippa Crerar challenged him on watering down net zero targets and letting down his daughters. Sunak had always said he wouldn't be able to look his daughters in the eye if he relaxed his climate change commitments.

He didn't care about his daughters because they wouldn't be paying £10k for a heat pump. Mmm. That's rather the point. But he had spoken to them and asked them which they preferred. The planet dying or Daddy being disappointed at the next election. These were hard choices. With that, Sunak headed to the exit.

Energy boss, carmakers and scientists condemn 'hugely retrograde' move

Joanna Partridge
Richard Partington
Sandra Laville

The boss of one of Britain's largest energy suppliers yesterday criticised the government's plan to row back on net zero policies, including the planned phase-out of gas boilers, as a "misstep on many levels".

Accusing Rishi Sunak of delaying the "vital work of transforming our economy", the chief executive of E.ON UK, Chris Norbury, said there was no "green v cheap" debate. He said delaying some environmental targets to reduce pressure on household budgets during a cost of living crisis was a "false argument".

The prime minister announced yesterday he was postponing several policies that he said would impose a direct cost on consumers. These include the introduction of energy-efficiency targets for private rented homes and a five-year delay to a ban on sales of new petrol and diesel cars.

Car industry leaders called the decision to push back the ban on sales of new internal combustion engine vehicles to 2035 "hugely retrograde" and said it could create anxiety given steps already taken by the sector to meet existing targets.

Norbury said Sunak's move risked "condemning people to many more years of living in cold and draughty homes that are expensive to heat, in cities clogged with dirty air from fossil fuels, missing out on the economic regeneration this ambition brings".

Jürgen Maier, a former chief executive of Siemens UK, was another business leader to criticise the prime minister's decision, saying Sunak's policy move was not "just chop and change" but "chaos".

"It beggars belief," he said, accusing the government of failing in its industrial policy. He added: "It's a disaster for productivity. It's a disaster for jobs, well-paid jobs. And it's a disaster for business confidence and investment - and we need exactly the opposite."

The chair of Ford UK, Lisa Brankin, said the move to relax the 2030 ban on sales of new petrol and diesel cars and vans would undermine the steps the US car manufacturer had taken to prepare for the change. "Our business needs three things from the UK government: ambition, commitment and consistency," she said.

Volkswagen's UK arm said the industry urgently required a clear and reliable regulatory framework that created market certainty and consumer confidence, with binding targets for infrastructure rollout and incentives.

The business secretary, Kemi Badenoch, was reported to have told fellow Tory MPs in a WhatsApp group: "The auto industry says lots of things in public and different things in private", according to a screenshot shared on the social media site X, formerly known as Twitter, by the Sun on Sunday's political editor.

Badenoch's message, which was liked by other Conservatives, claimed carmakers did "not always speak with one voice" and urged MPs to hear the government's plans before reacting.

Ian Plummer, the commercial director at the online marketplace AutoTrader, said the expected five-year delay on new petrol and diesel vehicles was a "hugely retrograde step". He said: "This U-turn will cause a huge headache for manufacturers, who are crying out for clarity and consistency, and it is hardly going to encourage the vast majority of drivers who are yet to buy an electric car to make the switch."

Many scientists had a similar reaction. Prof Dave Reay, executive director of Edinburgh Climate Change Institute, University of Edinburgh, said: "It's not pragmatic, it's pathetic. This rolling back on emissions cuts for short-term political gain will undermine the transition to net zero and with it the future opportunities, prosperity and safety of the entire country."

Prof Lord Stern of Brentford, chair of the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the LSE, said: "Chopping and changing will raise serious questions with businesses who see

Reaction

'Red wall' surprised by net zero rollback

Robyn Vinter
Kiran Stacey

'Rishi likes to jump on his little jet. I don't have a car, I don't fly on planes." In the opinion of Claire Savage, the manager of the Ironstone Miner pub in Guisborough, the prime minister's plan to water down net zero commitments that he says impose a direct cost on consumers is disingenuous.

She is not alone in thinking that. Savage lives in the constituency of Simon Clarke, the Tory MP for Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland, who said on Tuesday that his constituents did not support the rollback. The former levelling up secretary, who served under Liz Truss, posted on X, formerly known as Twitter: "Our climate is changing dramatically. The UK has carved out a world-leading role delivering net zero in a market-friendly way that will deliver clean, secure energy and thousands of jobs in deprived communities like Teesside. My Red Wall constituents overwhelmingly support it."

He appears to be right. Sunak's delays on the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and the phasing out of gas boilers were unpopular with those grabbing lunch in the rain yesterday.

For 17-year-old Jack McDougall, a geography student, there needs to be a more holistic approach to tackling net zero and the commitments the prime minister was rolling back on were already not enough. He said: "It's naive just to say we need to invest in more electric cars because in more deprived areas affording them is an issue. Mitigating climate change is really important so we need more investment, and wider investment, rather than less. I'm going to spend my life being affected by this. The damage is already being proven by the wildfires we're seeing."

Joanne Powell, who works at a local accountancy firm, agreed but said better infrastructure would incentivise more people to buy electric cars, rather than banning petrol cars. She said: "The main problem with the take-up of electric cars is that there aren't enough charging points. Things are not going to get better until they install more."

The green industry is growing on Teesside, where Europe's first lithium refinery was given the green light last month. It will start production in 2027, using materials imported from Australia, and is expected to have an annual production capacity of 50,000 tonnes of battery-grade lithium chemicals, enough to provide batteries for 1m electric car batteries.

"In the north-east in general, more jobs are needed," said Amy Leach, a student. "It's worth investing to create those jobs."

Sunak's move is designed to shore up support among those who voted for the Conservatives in 2019. But a new poll of 4,000 voters by Public First for the centre-right thinktank Onward shows it could backfire. According to the poll, the target of reaching net zero by 2050 is overwhelmingly popular, including with Conservative voters, 49% of whom say they support it, while only 20% oppose it.





▲ *Claire Savage (left) disapproved of Sunak's jet use; Joanne Powell called for more electric car charging points*
PHOTOGRAPHS: RICHARD SAKER/THE GUARDIAN

> ***'Mitigating climate change is really important so we need more investment rather than less'***
>
> **Jack McDougall**
> *Geography student*



a government who cannot be trusted to follow through on policy commitments, be they climate or otherwise.

"This will undermine investment and jeopardise growth … Change will involve all firms and households and government policy should be focused on managing that change and not postponing what is essential."

Mark Maslin, professor of climatology at University College London, said: "This goes against what the majority of the British people want given their concern about climate change. It also goes against sensible economics which shows that renewable energy is much cheaper and more secure than fossil fuel energy."

Greenpeace UK said the move would further harm Britain's standing as a leader in the effort to reduce emissions. Rebecca Newsom, its head of politics, said:"The grim reality is that Britain is no longer seen as a serious player in the global race for green growth. Under the Conservative government, Britain has gone from leader to laggard on climate change and further planned U-turns … will only hasten our waning influence on the world stage."



At the Ironstone Miner, a Wetherspoon pub named after the industry that supported the town – and left its scars on the land – Savage said she felt there was a need for a more international view. She said green technologies were far from perfect and a big concern was the impact on people who live and work in the areas where minerals used for electric cars were mined.

"What about the people who are left with big holes in the ground and environmental problems? Aren't we ruining the environment by digging up places?" she asked. "I'm not against [net zero investment], not at all. I just want them to do what's best for everyone, to do good."

PM's U-turns
Tearing up the green agenda

Rishi Sunak has announced a watering-down of the UK's net zero policies. Here, we look at the changes and what they mean.

Cars

New cars with combustion engines were due to be banned from sale by 2030. This has been pushed back to 2035. Sunak said by 2030 he expected "the vast majority" of cars sold would be electric, because they were getting cheaper, and people were buying more, but that people should make that decision themselves – not the government.

Experts disagree. Bob Ward, the policy and communications director at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics and Political Science, said: "Delaying the phase-out of petrol and diesel cars would mean that UK drivers will remain exposed to the volatility of international oil prices."

He added that the "weakening of the targets … will undermine investment, as many furious companies have pointed out today".

Peter Chalkley, the director of the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit, said the changes would actually end up costing consumers more.

He said: "The vast majority, 80%, of drivers buy secondhand, and secondhand petrol cars that would be on the market for literally decades to come. Delaying this policy will push up the cost of motoring as cheaper secondhand EVs that are much cheaper to run than petrol cars will be less available."

It could also cost in a wider sense as car manufacturers lose confidence in the UK because of its ever-changing targets and policies. As Lisa Brankin, the chair of Ford UK, said: "Our business needs three things from the UK government: ambition, commitment and consistency. A relaxation of 2030 would undermine all three."

Boilers

The UK's reliance on imported gas is expected to continue for longer as Sunak announced his plans to significantly weaken the plan to phase out the installation of gas boilers by 2035, instead aiming for only an 80% phase-out. He also said the 2026 ban on off-grid oil boilers would be delayed to 2035,



▲ *Cars with combustion engines can now be sold up until 2035*

with only an 80% phase-out target at that date.

Again, Sunak claims this was aimed at saving households money. While Ward said it was positive that the prime minister announced that grants for people under the boiler upgrade scheme would be increased by 50%, going up to £7,500, he added: "The prime minister appears to have forgotten that the current cost of living crisis has been triggered by a huge increase in the price of natural gas following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the UK would have suffered less if it had moved more quickly to embrace clean electricity and clean alternatives to gas central heating.

"If the winter ahead in Europe is long and cold, natural gas prices will rise again, leading to higher bills for households and businesses and higher inflation."

It is not always more expensive for homes to install heat pumps than traditional gas boilers. Octopus Energy this month unveiled a new heat pump design that, with current government support, can be installed for free in some homes, and for £3,000 in those that need upgrades including insulation. These costs will reduce as competition increases and more people install heat pumps. Heat pumps are also cheaper to operate than gas boilers if homes are well insulated.



80%

The revised target for phasing out gas boiler installations by 2035

Insulation

The UK has some of the most badly insulated housing stock in Europe. Sunak announced he would no longer require homeowners and landlords to meet energy efficiency targets.

This will save an immediate cost to landlords, who will not have to pay to insulate homes they do not live in, but their renters will face costs. Last year, research found that people living in more poorly insulated homes would have to spend £1,000 on gas over a winter.

Chalkley said: "The one measure that would have brought down bills is the landlord energy efficiency rules. Rented accommodation is some of the worst quality and so most costly to heat, with tenants having no power to insulate themselves. [This] will add to the cost of living for those struggling, not make things easier." **Helena Horton**

Analysis
Kiran Stacey

Sunak wants to be seen as a change candidate, but that's not easy after 13 years of Tory rule

Rishi Sunak looked as if he might blush when a reporter asked him if his climate speech on Wednesday was the political equivalent of Bazball – the swashbuckling style of cricket that has transformed England's results over the past year. However, some think the prime minister's announcement that he would roll back a number of significant climate targets was more like a Hail Mary pass in American football: a desperate final long throw attempted by a losing side.

Sunak said his announcements were not a one-off, but the beginning of a series of policy measures – which he will be hoping can turn around his faltering premiership. The prime minister has chalked up several policy wins in the past year, including a new deal with the EU over Northern Ireland, and is now seeing inflation begin to fall. None of this, however, has changed public opinion: Labour has remained between 15 and 20 points ahead in the polls since the start of the year.

In the past two weeks Sunak has shaken up his No 10 team, bringing back seasoned Conservative advisers in an attempt to link the policy operation in Downing Street more closely with the political one at Conservative party headquarters. Now he feels confident enough to start selling his new message.

The prime minister used the speech to distance himself from his predecessors more clearly than ever. "You don't reach net zero simply by wishing it," he said. "Yet that's precisely what previous governments have done – both Labour and Conservative." The word "change" was used 31 times, more than almost any other.

A poll published just hours before the speech started showed overwhelming public support for the 2050 net zero target

The strategy carries risks. First, Sunak is known by most voters as a pragmatic problem-solver, and the Conservatives have been in power for 13 years. Positioning himself as a radical "change" candidate at the next election may prove difficult. Second, there is no guarantee that the policies he has announced will be popular.

A Public First poll published hours before the speech started showed overwhelming support for the 2050 net zero target, with broad support for the deadlines on petrol cars and gas boilers. James Frayne of Public First said: "Those Conservatives that think watering down net zero will help them in the polls haven't been paying attention to their voters. Our research shows watering down net zero commitments risks doing more harm than good electorally because it provides yet another example of the government junking promises and missing long-range targets – things that are actually biting them in the polls. This will please a few activists and MPs but make many voters' eyes roll."

Some Tories worry that Sunak will end up making himself less popular with voters. Ryan Shorthouse of the centrist Conservative thinktank Bright Blue said: "I think the overall policy package and signalling is a mistake – electorally, economically and environmentally."

However, many around Sunak believe he has little option but to make a clearer divide between him and Labour. "We're not going to win the next election based on what we've already set out," said one. "We're going to have to do something different."

News
Environment

Europe warned it faces 'severe public health crisis' over air pollution

Continued *from page 1*

the north of the country breath air that is four times the WHO figure for the most dangerous airborne particulates.

The Guardian worked with pollution experts to produce an interactive map revealing the worst-hit areas. The measurements refer to PM2.5 - tiny airborne particles mostly produced by burning fossil fuels and some of which can pass through the lungs and into the bloodstream, affecting almost every organ.

The WHO says the annual average concentrations of PM2.5 should not exceed 5 micrograms a cubic metre. The new analysis found only 2% of the population of Europe live in areas within this limit. Experts say PM2.5 pollution causes about 400,000 deaths a year across the continent.

"This is a severe public health crisis," said Roel Vermeulen, a professor of environmental epidemiology at Utrecht University who led the team of researchers across the continent that compiled the data. "What we see quite clearly is that nearly everyone in Europe is breathing unhealthy air."

The data also reveals:

- Almost all residents in seven countries in eastern Europe - Serbia, Romania, Albania, North Macedonia, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary - have double the WHO guidance.
- More than half the population of North Macedonia and Serbia live with four times the WHO figure.
- In Germany, three-quarters of the population live with more than twice the WHO guidance. In Spain that figure is 49%, and in France it is 37%.
- In the UK, three-quarters of the population live in areas where exposure is between one and two times the WHO guidance, with almost a quarter over it.
- Close to 30 million Europeans live in areas with small particle concentrations at least four times the limit.
- In Sweden, by contrast, there is no area where PM2.5 reaches more than twice the figure, and some areas in northern Scotland are among the few across Europe that fall below it.
- Traffic, industry, domestic heating and agriculture are the main sources of PM2.5 and the impact is often felt disproportionately by the poorest.

Air pollution has become a key issue in Europe, with the EU coming under pressure to do more to tackle the growing public health crisis. Last week, the European parliament voted to adopt the WHO guidelines on PM2.5 by 2035. The law, which must still be finalised in negotiations with the council, would set a legally binding limit for annual PM2.5 concentrations of 5 micrograms a cubic metre, down from 25 today.

But experts say action is needed now and point to growing evidence that air pollution affects almost every organ in the body and is linked to a range of health problems from heart and lung disease to cancer and diabetes, depression and mental illness to cognitive impairment and low birth weight.

One recent study found air pollution was responsible for 1 million stillbirths a year, and another that young people living in cities already have billions of toxic air pollution particles in their hearts.

Dr Hanna Boogaard, an expert on air pollution in Europe at the US Health Effects Institute, said the new analysis was crucial to help inform the debate about air pollution and its effects in the continent, which she said resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths each year.

"These deaths are preventable and the estimate does not include millions of cases of non-fatal diseases, years lived with disability, attributable hospitalisations, or health effects from other pollutants." She said the move to toughen up the EU's limit provided "a unique opportunity to be bold … and maximise public health benefits for Europe and beyond".

Some towns and cities, including London and Milan, are making strides to tackle air pollution, from the introduction of ultra-low emissions zones to traffic reduction schemes and walking and cycling initiatives. But experts say politicians must act fast.

Research has also shown that within countries, poorer people are more likely to live in areas with the worst air pollution. Barbara Hoffmann, professor of environmental epidemiology at the University of Düsseldorf, said air pollution was an issue of "environmental injustice".

"The countries that are hit most are also the countries with the lowest mean income, with a few notable exceptions. Cleaning up the air specifically in eastern Europe is urgently needed to provide equal opportunities for a healthy life."

The data was compiled by academics at Utrecht University in the Netherlands and the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute as part of the EU-funded Expanse project. They used a combination of sources, from high-resolution satellite data to pollution monitoring stations and information about land use, to model annual average PM2.5 levels across Europe in 2019.

They say pollution levels will not be significantly different today, but added there may be areas where stringent anti-pollution measures had been implemented that have seen some improvement. The overall result is one of the most accurate and comprehensive pictures of air pollution across the continent to date.

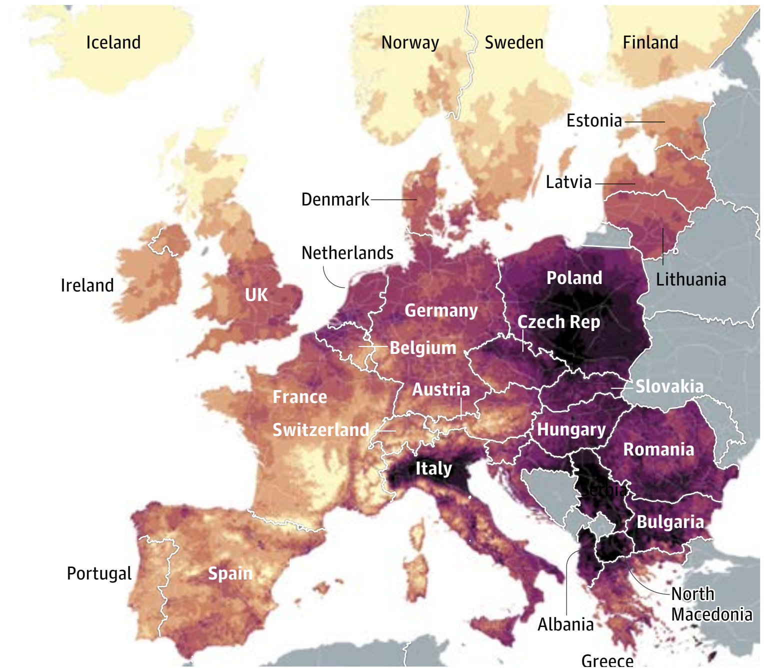
Vermeulen said: "This is the best data that there is available at the moment … Now we need politicians to be bold and ambitious and take the necessary steps to tackle this crisis."

Air pollution levels in Europe

Micrograms of PM2.5 per cubic metre (2000-19 avg)

0 | 5 | 7.5 | 10 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 19+ | No data

WHO safe air recommendation



Source: Expanse project; Guardian analysis

Dowden criticised for RAF flight to New York

Oliver Dowden flew on a near-empty RAF plane to the UN general assembly in New York earlier this week, prompting accusations of wasting taxpayers' money and damaging the environment unnecessarily.

The deputy prime minister travelled on a 158-seat RAF Voyager with only a few advisers and defence personnel, sources said. The aircraft is usually used to transport senior ministers with large delegations of officials, journalists and occasionally business executives.

Emily Thornberry, the shadow attorney general, said: "Oliver Dowden may think that deputising for Rishi Sunak means replicating his private



jet lifestyle, but it is wrong on every level for him to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds of public money using the biggest government plane to fly to New York, when there were any number of scheduled services he could have used instead."

A government spokesperson said: "Travel costs will be published in the usual way."

Kiran Stacey





◀ Protesters make a point in Skopje. Air pollution has been a big problem in the city for many years

PHOTOGRAPH: ROBERT ATANASOVSKI/AFP/GETTY

'The air tastes like burnt plastic'

Skopje's chronic pollution problem

Ajit Niranjan
Skopje

The hills that circle Skopje may have helped keep its citizens safe in times gone by, but they also trap the toxins that make its air among the most menacing of any city in Europe.

The mountains are the only escape, says Katarina, a 33-year-old accountant, as she walks home from an evening hike. "I was wearing a mask for air pollution before Covid."

Dirty fuel, bad design and tricky terrain have for decades choked the capital of North Macedonia, a former Yugoslav republic of 2 million people in the middle of the Balkans. The city sits in a valley where ageing factories whirr next to homes and offices. In winter, when people stoke stoves with waste wood, warm air rises to meet the cold and heavy mountain air above, forming a lid that traps pollution close to the ground.

The clouds last for days if the wind does not blow. "It feels and tastes like burnt plastic," says Dragana Gjurcinoska, 29, event manager at the Panoramika hotel at the foot of Vodno mountain.

Skopje is home to three of the most polluted districts on the continent, a Guardian analysis based on modelling of European air quality data has revealed. With cities across the western Balkans and in Poland, it is one of Europe's hotspots for particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter, known as PM2.5. Some of these slip through the lungs and into the veins, travelling through the body and wreaking havoc on the organs they meet.

A study in 2018 found Skopje residents died two to three years earlier on average than they would without this "largely preventable" environmental factor.

The cost to society "is very, very high", says Mihail Kocubovski, a co-author of the study and the head of the environment team at North Macedonia's institute of public health, which estimated the social cost of Skopje's air pollution as €0.5bn-€1.5bn (£860m-£1.3bn). "It is much better to pay €1 [on prevention], let's say, and to save €5 or €10 not spent on health issues," he says.

By cutting PM2.5 pollution to the EU's recommended limit, the researchers found, Skopje would avoid one in every five hospital trips for heart and lung disease. If it hit a stricter limit of 10 micrograms per metre cubed from the World Health Organization - which has since cut its limit to 5 micrograms and declared no level of air pollution to be safe - the city would halve such hospital visits.

In Skopje, people say they fear not just for their health, but also that of family and friends. "My mother has asthma, my husband has upper respiratory problems, and me as well," says Sara Carikj Jakimovska, 30, a technical adviser at a waste management consultancy and mother of a two-year-old. "The last three years my nose has been clogged all the time and I have trouble breathing."

For some residents, bad air is an extra reason to leave the country, along with the low wages and corruption fuelling a brain drain to the EU. More than 90% of young people want to move abroad, a survey from the nonprofit Youth Alliance found last year.

> *'My mother has asthma, my husband has respiratory problems and I have trouble breathing'*
>
> **Sara Carikj Jakimovska**
> *Skopje resident*



▼ A coal-fired power plant in Obilić, Kosovo. Balkan countries' reliance on coal fuels pollution in the region

PHOTOGRAPH: VALDRIN XHEMAJ/EPA-EFE

The economy is hit further because the air deters foreign workers and tourists.

From the Panoramika hotel's sixth-floor Sky Bar, Gjurcinoska says the bar's biggest advantage is the view. But on the worst days, she says, gesturing toward the city's terracotta roofs, the pollution is so bad "you cannot see Skopje at all".

At least the smog is now grey, not black. A few decades ago, Skopje burned even dirtier fuels that spewed sulphur dioxide. During what scientists call temperature inversions, when a layer of warm air formed a lid over the city, the sticky sulphur clung to water vapour in the air and made black smog that caked cars with soot. The city has since banned petrol that contains sulphur and its district heating plants run on gas, not oil.

PM2.5 pollution has also fallen slightly in recent years of warmer winters. But experts say there has been little effort to help households swap to cleaner fuels. Two-thirds of Skopje's residents burn wood, often using low-quality fuel in inefficient stoves, with some burning rubbish.

Bojana Stanojevska Pecurovska, the president of the nonprofit Centre for Climate Change, says the city should extend its district heating network, help people make homes more energy efficient and regulate the moisture content of firewood. "It's a social issue, and no one is dealing with it as a social issue," she said.

Experts have also called for stricter controls on factories, traffic and construction. When Skopje was rebuilt after the 1963 earthquake, corridors let air flow from east to west, blowing pollutants out through the valley. But in recent decades, locals say, buildings have sprung up that block those crucial airways.

From a bench in the industrial Aerodrom district, an opposition city councillor, Gorjan Jovanovski, points to three skyscrapers whose top floors poke above the smog in winter. "They're the only ones tall enough to rise above the temperature inversion, so if you're rich enough, you can buy your way out." What is harder to understand, he says, is that the children of the elites still breathe the same air when they go to school.

Jovanovski developed an app to aggregate air quality data that became popular in Skopje and other Balkan cities. But it did not translate into cleaner air, he says. In 2021, he and other disillusioned environmental activists ran for local office and won two of the city council's 45 seats. With air pollution, he says: "We're all aware, we know how to track it, particularly during winter time. The problem is the awareness seems to have stopped at the gates of the government."

The city council did not respond to a request for comment.



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Stars join Charles at lavish Versailles banquet during state visit to France

Angelique Chrisafis
Paris

King Charles was welcomed at a lavish state banquet at the Palace of Versailles last night, during a state visit to reinforce the renewed UK-France relationship after the near total collapse in trust during the Boris Johnson years after Brexit.

In Versailles' Hall of Mirrors, the 17th-century gallery built by Louis XIV to project the power and majesty of the French monarchy, Charles told the president, Emmanuel Macron: "Your generosity of spirit brings to mind how my family and I were so greatly moved by the tributes paid in France to my mother, the late queen … You said that she had touched your hearts - and it was she who held France in the greatest affection."

He praised the "*entente cordiale* - a sustainable alliance" between the countries, adding: "Whatever lies ahead, may it endure, faithful and constant, for centuries to come."

Charles was accompanied by Queen Camilla, who wore a blue silk crepe dress and matching cape by Dior, with diamonds inherited from the late queen.

More than 150 guests, including Mick Jagger and Hugh Grant, were seated along one vast, 60-metre-long table in order for everyone to be present "at the king's table". They ate a lobster and crab dish inspired by the tastes of Louis XIV, followed by French poultry marinaded in champagne and a gratin of French cèpe mushrooms.

Other guests included the British-French actor and singer Charlotte Gainsbourg and the chief executive of the French luxury goods empire LVMH, Bernard Arnault, who is one of the world's richest people. Several guests from the world of sport included the former football coach Arsène Wenger, the former footballers Didier Drogba and Patrick Vieira, the tennis player Amélie Mauresmo and Tony Estanguet, the three-time Olympic canoeing champion who is head of the 2024 Paris Olympics organising committee.

The dessert, by the patissier Pierre Hermé, was a reinvention of his signature macaron with lychee and rose sorbet and raspberry compote. There was notably no foie gras - the pâté obtained by force-feeding ducks or geese - on the menu as the king has banned it from the royal household.

A selection of English cheeses included stichelton, a British blue cheese similar to stilton that uses unpasteurised milk.

Stéphane Bern, the French broadcaster and royal commentator, who was a guest at the dinner, said: "Versailles is a showcase for France. This is about Franco-British friendship. It is about the excellence of the French art of fine-dining, and it's about showing the best of France to the British."

The king's trip is seen as the "soft power" follow-up to Rishi Sunak's drive to repair the Paris-London relationship at a summit earlier this year, which addressed issues such as the crisis of people risking their lives to cross the Channel in small boats. "Despite Brexit and because our ties are so old, I know that we will continue to write together part of our continent's history," Macron said in his toast at the Versailles dinner.

Earlier in the day, Charles lit the flame at the tomb of the unknown soldier at Paris's Arc de Triomphe before travelling down the Champs Élysées with Macron to hold one-to-one talks on issues including the war in Ukraine and recent coups in Africa's Sahel region.

Charles, on his 35th visit to France, and Camilla landed at Orly airport on a British Airways flight and were met on a red carpet by the prime minister, Élisabeth Borne. The king and queen were driven from the airport in their own Bentley, which had been transported from the UK.





▲ *Hugh Grant and his wife, Anna Eberstein, and (below) Mick Jagger and his partner, Melanie Hamrick, arrive at the banquet last night*



◀ *King Charles and Queen Camilla with Emmanuel Macron and his wife, Brigitte, outside the Palace of Versailles before last night's state dinner*
PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS JACKSON/GETTY IMAGES

35
Number of visits made to France by Charles, who arrived at Orly airport yesterday

Libraries and fields among £15bn council assets sold off since 2010

Robyn Vinter
North of England correspondent

About 75,000 public assets worth £15bn have been sold by English councils since 2010, in part to plug holes in their budgets, a thinktank has found.

An average of 6,000 council assets - such as playing fields, community centres, libraries, youth clubs and swimming pools - worth £1.2bn have been sold each year in the past 13 years, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) estimated in an analysis of government data and statistics obtained through a freedom of information request. By contrast, the research estimated just 2,500 assets came newly into community ownership during the same time.

The research was published as Birmingham city council said it would sell further assets as part of an attempt to get its finances back on track, despite having sold more assets than any other council in the nine years after the start of swingeing government cuts to budgets in 2010.

A change in the law in 2016 meant councils no longer had to buy public assets with money made from selling them and instead could use it to make up for funding shortfalls.

The government is taking over the running of Birmingham council, which serves more than 1 million people and has a budget shortfall of £87m for the current financial year, projected to rise to £165m in 2024-25.

The IPPR is calling for fairer funding from national government to ensure areas that need investment get it, and "participatory budgeting" so that communities can decide how money is spent. Currently only 1% of budgets are spent this way. It is also calling for common good property registers to increase transparency of public asset ownership to protect communities from losses. This would work alongside support for communities to regain assets.

The IPPR and IPPR North launched a report yesterday called Parallel Lives: Regionally Rebalancing Wealth, Power and Opportunity, which involved speaking to citizens of Hastings, Redcar and Stoke-on-Trent about patching up "the holes in a threadbare social safety net".

A Stoke-on-Trent resident who participated said: "I just think that the people who live in it should be the people who are given the opportunity to have a say on how to transform it, and how to better it. It's all very well politicians from London having a say on our situation, but they haven't walked in our shoes.".

Zoë Billingham, the director of IPPR North and co-author of the report, said: "People have lost far too much over the last 13 years. Communities have lost billions worth of public land and buildings in their areas, local safety nets are crumbling all while government plays fast and loose with major regional infrastructure projects."

Residents, she said, "want functioning public services, to receive a fair share of investment and to restore pride in their place". She added: "It's time to rewire the status quo so that wealth, power and opportunity can be accessed and shared by everyone, in the places they live."

The government has been contacted for a response.

6,000
The average number of public assets sold by councils in England each year, worth about £1.2bn

Eating highly processed food 'could raise risk of depression'

Anna Bawden

Consuming large amounts of ultra-processed food, especially drinks containing artificial sweeteners, is associated with a higher risk of depression, research has found.

Despite extensive data linking ultra-processed food (UPF) with physical ill health, such as strokes, heart attacks and raised blood pressure, this is the first large study to suggest that consuming UPF and drinks, particularly those which include artificial sweeteners, could increase the instance of depression.

Using data from one of the biggest studies of women's long-term health in the US, researchers at Massachusetts general hospital and Harvard medical school examined the diets and mental health of more than 30,000 primarily white middle-aged women between 2003 and 2017 who did not already have depression.

The authors estimated the overall extent of UPF intake as well as the type of food, such as ultra-processed grain foods, sweet snacks, ready-to-eat meals, fats and sauces, ultra-processed dairy products, savoury snacks, processed meat, beverages and artificial sweeteners.

They then compared how many women went on to develop depression against their consumption of UPF. The research, published in the American journal JAMA Network Open, found those who consumed nine portions or more of UPF a day had a 49% increased risk of depression compared with those who consumed fewer than four portions.


The study focused on ultra-processed food

30,000

The number of women whose diets and mental health from 2003-17 were studied by US researchers



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Met officers face tribunal over stop of two black athletes

Haroon Siddique
Legal affairs correspondent

Metropolitan police officers who were "aggressive and confrontational" stopped a car in which the British athlete Bianca Williams was travelling with her partner and baby, lied that they could smell cannabis and detained them "because they're black", a tribunal has heard.

Five members of the Met's territorial support group are accused of gross misconduct over the 4 July 2020 stop of Williams and the Portuguese sprinter Ricardo Dos Santos in Maida Vale, north-west London.

Acting Sgt Rachel Simpson, PC Allan Casey, PC Jonathan Clapham, PC Michael Bond and PC Sam Franks deny all the charges.

The couple were handcuffed and searched on suspicion of possessing drugs and weapons.

At the opening of the tribunal in central London, Karon Monaghan KC, representing the director general of the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), said: "It is alleged that the officers treated Mr Dos Santos and Miss Williams in this way because they're black… The director general will say that the detention of Mr Dos Santos and Miss Williams for 45 minutes, on the road, in full view of their neighbours was because they were black …

"The director general will say that not only did the officers lie about smelling cannabis, they did so because Mr Dos Santos was black."

The tribunal was told that Simpson had not smelled cannabis, despite leaning into the car. Nevertheless she detained Williams while awaiting a police dog even though she could "see now" that she was not in a gang.

Monaghan said: "It was obvious that she [Williams] was with her partner and son rather than all being members of a gang." The tribunal was told it was inconceivable that Dos Santos would have used or been around people who had used cannabis given that he and Williams were returning from training and that he was driving his baby.

Monaghan said that Dos Santos had told the IOPC that he had previously been stopped several times while driving by officers. She said this explained why Dos Santos was swearing while being detained.

"The officers' actions were aggressive and confrontational and they had no reasonable grounds to suspect that Mr Dos Santos was in possession of an offensive weapon," she said, adding: "Mr Dos Santos will say that as he was driving on Great Western Road, he made eye contact with PC Casey and sensed at that moment that the police carrier was going to follow him."

The officers have maintained they did not realise the driver - Dos Santos - was black until the car was stopped. But Monaghan said: "The fact that the driver was black caused him [Casey] to think there was something suspicious, in a way that he would not have thought if the driver had been white."

She said the IOPC would also rely on evidence of institutional racism in the case, which may last six weeks.

The Met police apologised to Williams days after the stop.


PHOTOGRAPH: DAVE BENETT/GETTY IMAGES

▲ *Athletes Bianca Williams and Ricardo Dos Santos with their son Zuri-Li*



◀ *Russell Brand leaving Wembley Park Theatre in London on Saturday. His subsequent tour dates have been postponed*
PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES MANNING/PA

Allegations prompt clamour for debate over the age of consent

Alexandra Topping

There are growing calls for the laws and social norms around the age of consent to be reassessed after allegations Russell Brand sexually assaulted a 16-year-old when he was in his 30s.

The alleged victim, who told the Sunday Times Brand had had a three-month relationship with her that started in 2006, has called for a debate around staggered ages of consent. Speaking on BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour on Tuesday, the woman known by the alias Alice said it was time to "start to think about changing" the law and "staggered ages of consent".

"There's a reasonable argument [that] individuals between the ages of 16 and 18 can have relations with people within that same age bracket," she said, adding that there should be a way to prevent older adults from exploiting 16 and 17-year-olds. "You're allowed to make mistakes as a teenager, they should be with other people your own age."

Her comments come after Brand was accused of rape, sexual assault and emotional abuse over a seven-year period after an investigation by the Times, the Sunday Times and Channel 4 Dispatches. Brand denies all the allegations.

Jayne Butler, the CEO of the charity Rape Crisis England and Wales, said: "The current law is problematic because it is creating a space where people don't think relationships between young, potentially vulnerable people and someone much older is unacceptable." She said one potential area that could be explored was extending the provision under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, which makes it illegal to take part in sexual activity with someone under 18 if you are someone in a position of trust, such as a teacher.

Butler said she recognised concerns about criminalising consensual sex between teenagers of a similar age but added: "We need to explore what can be put in place to make it clearer what is or is not OK. But this is not just about changing laws, it's about changing attitudes."

Helena Kennedy KC, one of the UK's most renowned criminal lawyers and a Labour peer, said judges could be given a "public reminder" that they were obliged to take power imbalances such as large disparities in age into consideration when sentencing. "But of course for that you need a prosecution," she said. "The truth is the criminal justice system does not deal well with allegations of sexual assault and rape and women still have problems being heard and being believed."

> ***'At some point we have to realise that nothing has changed'***
>
> **Laura Bates**
> *Everyday Sexism Project*

Laura Bates, the founder of the Everyday Sexism Project and author of Men Who Hate Women, said a debate about the law was needed. However, any shift in the law would only be "a piece of the puzzle".

"Our society doesn't blink an eye about the predatory nature of much older men engaging in relationships with much younger women," she said. "We can't just keep saying things have changed. At some point we have to realise that nothing has changed; that this is still completely socially acceptable."

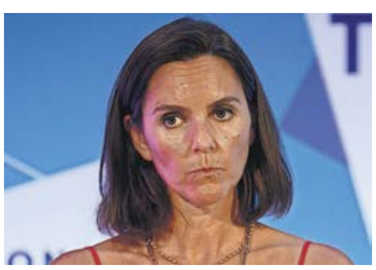
Deniz Uğur, the deputy director of the End Violence Against Women Coalition charity, said that sex and relationships education in schools was critical. "We urgently need to see investment in and prioritisation of this vital education, which can help us shift harmful attitudes and norms across society," she said.

C4 boss: Brand storm reveals how TV tolerated 'terrible' misogyny

Jim Waterson

Channel 4's boss has said the allegations against Russell Brand show how "terrible behaviour" against women has been tolerated in the television industry.

Alex Mahon, the broadcaster's chief executive, said one of the most shocking elements of the documentary was seeing "what appeared on air not that long ago", when broadcasters were happy to show Brand making misogynistic jokes.



▲ *Channel 4's Alex Mahon said the allegations against Russell Brand were 'disgusting and saddening'*

Channel 4's Dispatches documentary included a clip from Brand's 2006 standup tour, which was released on DVD, where he told a laughing audience he liked "blowjobs where mascara runs a little bit".

The Sunday Times and Dispatches interviewed a woman who was 16 years old when she had a relationship with Brand, then 31. She described him stating his desire to make her mascara run during sex.

Individuals who worked with Brand during that era have told journalists they were advised to be careful around him, rather than confronting the comedian over his behaviour on set. Brand has said all his relationships were consensual.

Mahon told the Royal Television Society's Cambridge conference the allegations were "disgusting and saddening", and she wanted to know whether complaints registered at the time were passed to senior management. "We will seek to find what was - or wasn't - referred up," she said.

The BBC and Channel 4 have removed material featuring Brand from their websites, although he has retreated from mainstream outlets in recent years. On Tuesday Brand lost access to one of his main sources of income when YouTube decided to stop him monetising his channel.

In brief

Anthropology

Bridge found to predate modern humans

Researchers have discovered remnants of what is thought to be the world's oldest known wooden structure, an arrangement of logs on the bank of a river bordering Zambia and Tanzania that predates the rise of modern humans.

The structure, made by shaping two logs, may have formed part of a walkway or platform for human ancestors who lived along the Kalambo river nearly 500,000 years ago. Marks on the logs show they were cut with stone tools found at the site. One log overlies the other and is held in place by a large inverted U-shaped notch in its underside. Ian Sample

Art and culture

Church unveils tribute to abolitionist Cugoano

A permanent artwork to mark the 250th anniversary of the baptism of Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, one of Britain's most important abolitionists, has been unveiled at a church in central London.

The paintings by the Trinidad-based artist Che Lovelace, displayed at St James's Piccadilly, are the first permanent art commissioned to commemorate Cugoano, who was kidnapped in 1770 by slavers at the age of 13.

The Rev Lucy Winkett, St James's rector and chaplain to the Royal Academy, said it was a duty and honour to mark the anniversary. Nadia Khomami

Technology

Fry's AI alarm over fake documentary voiceover

Stephen Fry has issued a warning about the potential dangers of AI after claiming that a history documentary faked his voice without his knowledge. Speaking at the tech-based CogX festival in London, Fry (below) played a clip of a programme seemingly narrated by him, before explaining it was the result of digital cloning.

"We have to think about [AI] like the first automobile: impressive but not the finished article," he said, according to Fortune magazine. "When it comes to AI models, what we have now will advance at a faster rate than any technology we have ever seen." Alexi Duggins





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NHS 'close to breaking point' amid strikes by doctors

Denis Campbell
Health policy editor



▲ *BMA members on the picket line outside Manchester Royal Infirmary* PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER THOMOND/THE GUARDIAN

Hospital bosses fear that further strikes by doctors will push the NHS "close to breaking point" as it struggles to cope with its winter crisis in the months ahead.

NHS chiefs are concerned that medics' plans to continue their campaign of stoppages until February will make it even harder for the service to negotiate a period when it is always under its greatest pressure.

Four days of walkouts this week in England have included the first-ever 24-hour joint strike over pay yesterday by consultants and junior doctors.

These latest stoppages - two days by consultants and three days by junior doctors - have forced hospitals to reschedule thousands of outpatient appointments and non-urgent operations owing to lack of staff.

"Winter pressures, respiratory illness and rising Covid again mean that the next six months will be exceptionally difficult. Winter always is," said one hospital trust chief executive, who asked not to be named.

"The NHS is effective at absorbing pressure but the industrial action may, at times, take us close to breaking point and often patient harm and the impact on NHS staff is not fully recognised," he said.

> *'We need to see a resolution before winter begins to bite'*
>
> **Matthew Taylor**
> *NHS Confederation*

Matthew Taylor, the chief executive of the NHS Confederation, which speaks for trusts, urged ministers and the unions representing doctors to reopen negotiations and agree a pay settlement.

"We need to see a resolution to this situation before winter begins to bite," said Taylor.

Relations between the government and the British Medical Association (BMA), the main doctors' union, are becoming increasingly acrimonious. On Tuesday the union issued a rebuttal of remarks that Steve Barclay, the health secretary, had made on BBC Radio 4's Today programme. They accused him of "misleading the public about doctors' pensions and the independence of the pay review process" that helps set medics' pay.

Consultants have a legal mandate to keep striking until the end of December and junior doctors until late February.

Junior doctors are seeking a 35% pay rise as soon as possible while consultants are seeking a rise of about 12% for this year. However, Barclay has already imposed rises averaging 8.8% on juniors and 6% on consultants.

James Bulger killer granted parole hearing

Josh Halliday
North of England correspondent

The child killer Jon Venables will make a fresh attempt to be released from prison at a parole hearing in November.

Venables and his schoolfriend, Robert Thompson, were both 10 when they murdered two-year-old James Bulger after taking him from his mother's side in a shopping centre in Merseyside in 1993.

Venables, now 41, has been in prison since 2017 after being convicted for a second time of possessing child abuse images.

A two-day parole hearing has been set for 14 November and will be heard in private, despite efforts to open up the Parole Board process.

James's parents, Denise Fergus and Ralph Bulger, have consistently argued for Venables to spend the rest of his life in prison.

A three-person panel will decide whether Venables, who has a new identity, continues to pose a risk to the public after reviewing evidence including testimony from prison and probation officials and Venables himself.

If the panel believes he poses little risk, he could be released within days - although the justice secretary, Alex Chalk, has the power to ask for the decision to be reviewed and would probably exercise this right.

Surveys show revolution in British values over 40 years

Patrick Butler
Social policy editor



▲ *Few now oppose same-sex relationships* PHOTOGRAPH: PETER NICHOLLS/GETTY

From attitudes to gay sex and single parenting to views on abortion and the role of women in the home, Britain has evolved into a dramatically more liberal-minded country over the past four decades, a landmark study has found.

The transformation in public opinion on many social and moral issues, described by one of the study's researchers as "a near revolution", is captured in the latest British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey, which is marking its 40th year of mapping Britain's cultural and political landscape.

Examples of the ascendancy of liberal views include attitudes towards same-sex relationships – 50% of respondents said these were "always wrong" in 1983, compared with 9% in 2022 – and a woman's right to choose an abortion, supported by 76% now, against 37% when the question was first asked 40 years ago.

There have been similarly seismic changes in public attitudes towards sex before marriage, having children outside wedlock, and traditional gender roles in the workplace and the home, to the extent, according to the BSA, that Britain "now looks and feels like a different country from 40 years ago".

However, the study notes that attitudes towards transgender people – recorded only since 2016 – appear more volatile, with a recent sharp decline in public support. The proportion of the British public describing themselves as "not prejudiced" towards transgender people fell from 82% to 64% between 2021 and 2022, the latest survey year.

Similarly, while 58% of the British public agreed in 2016 that transgender people should be able to have the sex on their birth certificate changed if they want, that support had dropped to 30% by 2022, suggesting "an overall gradual erosion in support towards transgender rights" since 2018.

76%
Proportion of people in 2022 who backed a woman's right to choose. In 1983 the figure was just 37%

This change in attitudes may reflect the "intense political and media discussion" and increasing public "ambivalence or uncertainty", the study suggests. Women were more likely to express liberal views on transgender people than men (71% said they were "not prejudiced" against 57% of men), as were young people (69% of 18-34 year olds) compared with the over-70s (51%).

The study suggests the evolution of liberal public attitudes has been driven by profound social changes such as more people going to university, more women going out to work, and the decline in marriage and organised religion.

"The vast social changes that Britain has witnessed over the last 40 years have been accompanied by a near-revolution in attitudes towards many social and moral issues," said Sir John Curtice, the political scientist and co-author of the study.

One way of appreciating the transformation might to be imagine if a time machine were to transport a typical British citizen from 1983 to the present, the BSA says.

"Our citizen would find her 1980s moral and cultural compass of limited value," it adds.

Study finds how baby's cry sets off breast milk

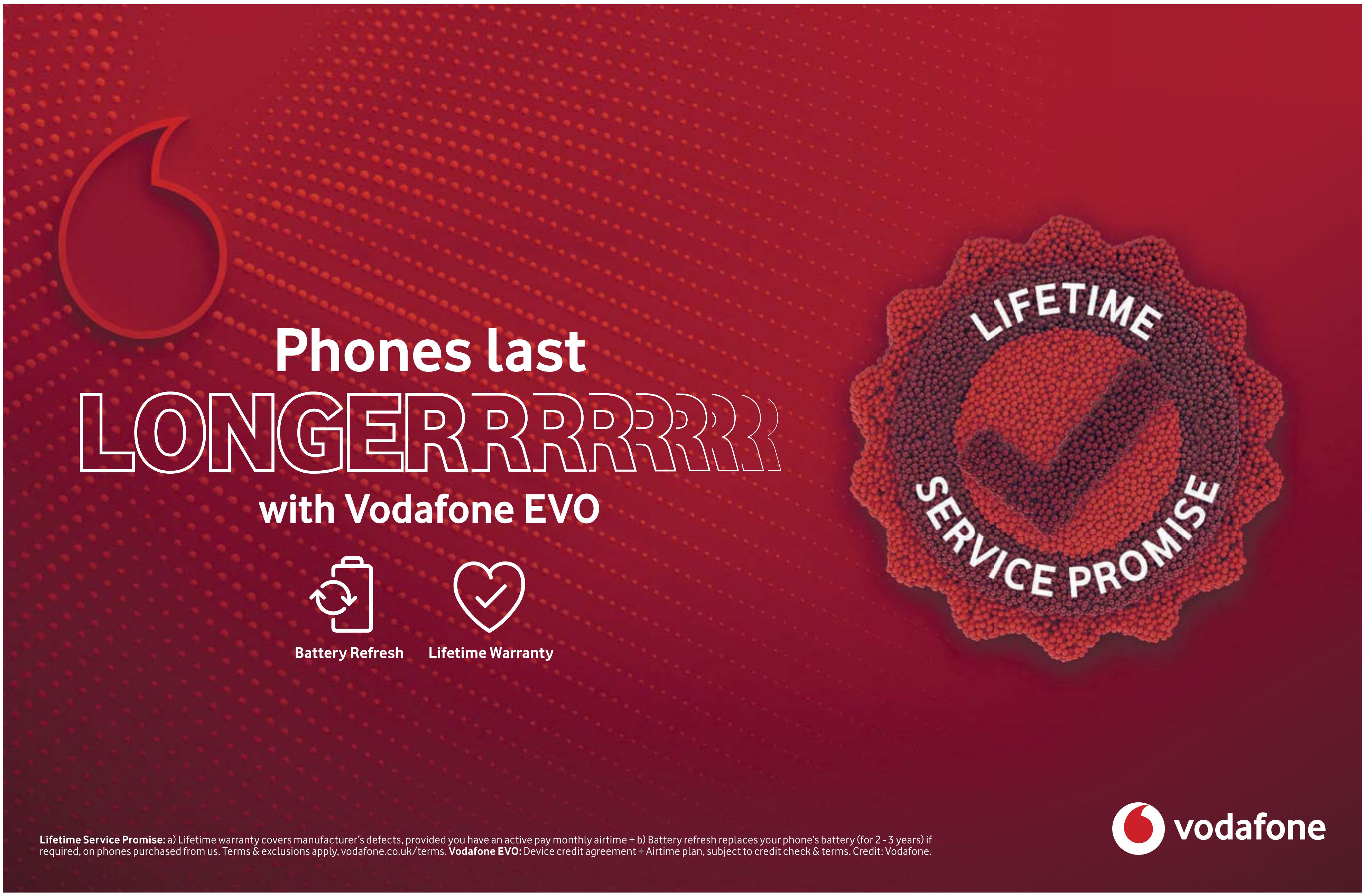
Hannah Devlin

The brain circuit that causes the sound of a newborn's cries to trigger the release of breast milk in mothers has been uncovered by scientists.

The observation that a mother's breasts can leak milk when she hears a crying baby is not new. But the research identifies the brain mechanisms behind what scientists call the "wail-to-milk pipeline".

The findings, published in Nature, show how the sound of a crying mouse pup travels to an area of its mother's brain called the posterior intralaminar nucleus of the thalamus (PIL). This then sends signals to brain cells in the hypothalamus, which trigger the release of oxytocin, the chemical that controls breast milk.

In mice it takes 30 seconds of crying for PIL signals to set off oxytocin release. Prof Robert Froemke of NYU Langone Health, co-author of the study, said the findings give scientists a roadmap for how the process might work in humans.



Power cuts in Wales and England as rain and high winds sweep in

Steven Morris

Hundreds of homes and businesses were hit by power cuts, and roads and a railway line were blocked, as heavy rain and high winds battered parts of the UK yesterday.

Yellow weather warnings were in place for areas of Wales, the north-west and south of England, and west Scotland.

More than 500 homes had power cuts in Wales, from Carmarthenshire and Monmouthshire in the south to the Llŷn peninsula in the north. There were also outages in Somerset and Cornwall. The Met Office issued a yellow severe weather warning lasting until 6pm covering much of Wales and north-west England, saying heavy rain could lead to flooding.

A separate yellow warning was in place for parts of western Scotland, where winds of up to 75mph were expected to hit coastlines yesterday afternoon and evening. Heavy rain was also predicted for southern and eastern England, including London.

75mph

Strength of winds expected on the coastline of west Scotland, where a yellow warning was in place

By yesterday lunchtime, Natural Resources Wales had 11 flood warnings and 30 flood alerts in place. The Environment Agency had one flood warning in place in England, for Keswick campsite in Cumbria.

Traffic Wales reported flooding on roads across the country, and there were restrictions on some bridges.

Devon has had a particularly miserable time of it this week, with flash flooding hitting homes and businesses on Sunday and causing Exeter airport to close temporarily.

A hosepipe ban across Cornwall and Devon will be lifted on Monday, South West Water said. The utility company said all restrictions, many of which came into force in August 2022, were being lifted after reviews of reservoir levels.

The Met Office said the warm, strong winds would be replaced by chillier north-westerly ones by the end of the week, just in time for the autumn equinox on Saturday.



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▲ *Rose Knox-Peebles in her two-and-a-half-hour London stage appearance as Erda in Das Rheingold* PHOTOGRAPH: MONIKA RITTERSHAUS/ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

That's how I look and I like it says actor, 82, called 'a fright' by critic

Amelia Hill

Rose Knox-Peebles was on a high after the opening night of Das Rheingold at the Royal Opera House earlier this week.

It was the first time the 82-year-old model, who plays Erda - Mother Earth - had performed in an opera. In a baptism of fire, Barrie Kosky, the director, decided to keep her character on stage, naked, for the entire two-and-a-half-hour performance.

The reviews were glowing: Knox-Peebles' performance was "remarkable and gracefully brave" said one reviewer. Another said she performed a difficult part with "great skill". Yet another said she was "visually arresting" and her constant presence on the stage was the producer's "finest interpretative moment".

But when Knox-Peebles turned to her favourite newspaper - the Financial Times - she got a shock. "Not only was the review terribly short and superficial but it accused me of having been 'made up to look quite a fright'," she said.

Knox-Peebles was not upset about being told she looked "a fright" by the critic, Richard Fairman - she couldn't give two hoots what anyone thinks about her appearance - but she was upset by what she thought of as the lazy inaccuracy of the statement.

"I was furious," she said. "I hadn't been 'made up' to look like a fright. That's what I looked like. It was me.

"I don't actually think I do look like a fright," she added. "I'm perfectly happy with the way I look."

Knox-Peebles fired off a letter to the newspaper. To her great amusement, it was published. "The 'fright' look is all naturally mine," she wrote, signing her letter "Erda".

The media loved it. "'Frightful' makeup is just my face, octogenarian tells opera critic," a headline for the Times said. "Opera critic calls 81-year-old actress's make-up 'frightful' … but she wasn't wearing any," wrote the Daily Telegraph.

Knox-Peebles said she had better things to do than worry about a critic who confused an opera stage with a catwalk. "My appearance was obviously totally irrelevant. I'm supposed to be 4.9 billion years old, so I would hardly look like some beautiful young thing," she said yesterday.

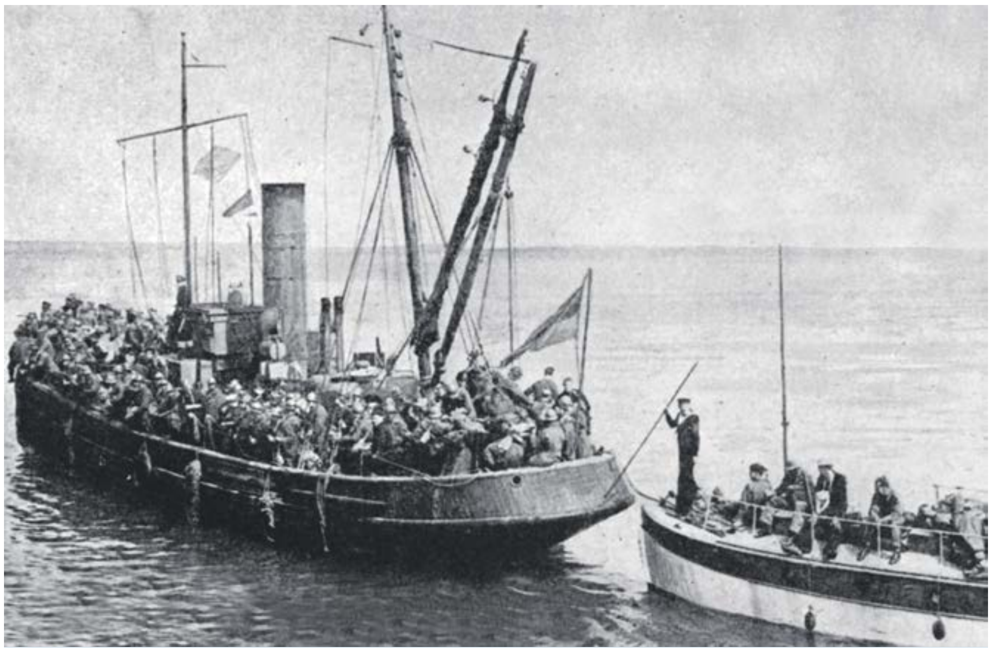
She added: "I'm having a wonderful time. I got married at 18 and had four children. I never worked until 20 years ago, when I started modelling, more or less by chance. Since then, I've been in Vogue, in music videos - bopping around like anybody else - and having the time of my life.

"To my eyes, getting old is a plus. Until this thing - whatever it was - I've not been treated differently at all over my age," she added. "If anything, ageing is a bonus: I get offered seats on the underground."

The Financial Times was contacted for comment.

Experts to search for shipwrecks from heroic evacuation of Dunkirk

Esther Addley



◀ Some of the 'little ships' that rescued allied troops in 1940
PHOTOGRAPH: PHOTO12/UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP/GETTY

Churchill called the mass evacuation of allied forces from the beach and pier at Dunkirk a "miracle of deliverance" - but the operation to rescue more than 330,000 troops who had been trapped by German forces in May 1940 came at a heavy cost.

Of the up to 1,000 boats that scrambled to help the stranded soldiers, hundreds of vessels were sunk during the nine-day Operation Dynamo, with the loss of many lives.

More than eight decades later, French and British archaeologists are embarking on a joint survey of the waters off the northern French city, using the latest technology to scour the seabed for shipwrecks from the heroic rescue armada.

They hope to learn more about 37 wrecks whose locations are known in the vicinity, and to locate other sunken ships - some of which may be large vessels - whose exact whereabouts remain unknown.

The project, jointly run by France's department of underwater archaeological research (Drassm) and Historic England, will begin next week with a surface-level scan of the seabed, using geophysical survey equipment including a multibeam echo sounder, side-scan sonar and magnetometer.

The hope, said Cécile Sauvage, an archaeologist co-leading the expedition for Drassm, is to build up a detailed picture that will allow divers to return next year for excavations.

Having carried out a similar survey of vessels involved in the Normandy landings, she is aware those that survive may be in a precarious condition.

"We want to save them by studying them," she said, adding that she would love "to understand the event by finding different types of ships involved".

Many different kinds of vessels, flying British, French, Belgian, Dutch, Polish, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish flags, were involved in the evacuation - from destroyers and gunboats to yachts, lifeboats, fishing boats, tugs and small private boats that rushed across the Channel from the English coast to help.

> *'Dunkirk is not just a British event - I think it's important to remember that'*
> **Antony Firth**

Those that have remained intact are likely to be the larger vessels, said Antony Firth, Historic England's head of marine heritage strategy. "The popular imagination is around Dunkirk's 'little ships', and there's no taking away from their significance, but more troops were lifted by larger vessels," he said. "Because they are more robust, they will tend to be more visible to the kinds of methods that we're using."

While smaller craft are unlikely to be intact, they may have left remnants such as engines and boilers that could be detected, he added.

Many of the wrecks are known by name, and one that will be examined is the Brighton Queen, a paddle steamer that had been pressed into service as a minesweeper. It was carrying 700 French Moroccan troops, of whom nearly half perished when it was sunk by German gunfire. "Dunkirk is not just a British event - I think it's important to remember that," said Firth.

The survey, he said, would "bring the focus back to the maritime dimension of Dunkirk and the fact that physical remains of that are still there on the seabed, as they are with many different aspects of our maritime heritage".



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Eyewitness



Paris
Staff at the Louvre take down Eugène Delacroix's 1830 Liberty Leading the People for restoration in what Sébastien Allard, the director of the paintings department, describes as 'a major restoration campaign launched in 2019 for large 19th-century paintings' PHOTOGRAPH: DIMITAR DILKOFF/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



World

Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire agreed after scores die in Azerbaijani attack

Andrew Roth
Sam Jones

A ceasefire agreement has been reached a day after Azerbaijan launched a new military offensive against the local Armenian government in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, potentially averting a wider war but threatening the long-term existence of the ethnic Armenian enclave there.

The agreement took effect at 1pm local time yesterday and included provisions for the local Armenian government to disband its military, in a capitulation to Azerbaijan.

In a televised address last night, Azerbaijan's president, Ilham Aliyev, claimed victory, saying that his country had "restored its sovereignty" over the territory following the 24-hour offensive, praising his army and claiming that it had accepted the "complete surrender" of local Armenian fighters.

In the speech, he blamed a "criminal junta" for the conflict and said it appeared that local Armenians from Karabakh had "forgotten that they live in Azerbaijan". He said the Azerbaijani army would not engage in reprisals against the local population.

One separatist official said at least 200 people had been killed and more than 400 wounded after Azerbaijan launched what it described as an "anti-terrorist operation" in the disputed south Caucasus region on Tuesday. Gegham Stepanyan, the region's rights ombudsman, said at least 10 civilians were among the dead, five of them children.

Officials in the regional capital, Stepanakert, and the Azerbaijani capital, Baku, confirmed that representatives would meet in Azerbaijan today for negotiations. Azerbaijan, which has demanded the dissolution of the local government in Nagorno-Karabakh, said the talks would include plans for the reintegration of the region.

Later, an adviser to Aliyev said it had readied a "plan for the reintegration of the Armenian population of Karabakh". Officials in the breakaway region of Stepanakert have accused Baku of preparing a campaign of ethnic cleansing.

The president of the European Council, Charles Michel, told Aliyev to protect the rights of ethnic Armenians and "to ensure full ceasefire and safe, dignified treatment by Azerbaijan of Karabakh Armenians". Michel wrote on social media: "Their human rights and security need to be ensured. Access needed for immediate humanitarian assistance."

The breakaway government in Stepanakert referred to an agreement to "pull out the remaining detachments and troops of the Armenian armed forces from the zone of deployment of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, to disband and fully disarm armed units of the Nagorno-Karabakh defence army, and pull out heavy hardware and weapons from the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh".

Both sides said the deal had been mediated by the local Russian peacekeeping force, which has been in the region since war broke out in 2020.

Local officials said earlier that 27 people had been killed and 200 wounded after Azerbaijan launched its offensive. Although fighting died down after the ceasefire announcement, shelling continued last night.

An unknown number of Russian peacekeepers were killed yesterday after the car they were driving came under fire, Moscow said.

Photographs have shown thousands of ethnic Armenian civilians crowding into a local airport protected by Russian peacekeepers. The Russian defence ministry said 2,261 civilians, including 1,049 children, were being sheltered at the base at Khojali airport near Stepanakert.

Vladimir Putin rejected criticism that Russian peacekeepers had stood aside while Azerbaijan reignited the conflict. "Our peacekeepers are working very actively with all parties involved in the conflict," he said.





Yerevan

Armenian protesters rail at 'capitulation' to Baku over disputed enclave

Howard Amos
Yerevan

Thousands of protesters have taken to the streets of the Armenian capital after Azerbaijan launched a full-scale military assault on the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The demonstration came amid rising discontent with Armenia's prime minister, Nikol Pashinyan, the inaction of Russian peacekeepers and the failure of western governments to stop bloodshed.

The announcement of a ceasefire in the disputed enclave yesterday appeared to involve the capitulation of local defence forces and looked set to fuel the political unrest in Armenia, piling pressure on Pashinyan.

Protesters smashed the windows of government buildings on Yerevan's central Republic Square late on Tuesday as they scuffled with police in an attempt to get inside. Security officers responded by throwing stun grenades into the crowd.



◀ *Armenian police detain a man protesting in Yerevan yesterday, after thousands took to the streets*
PHOTOGRAPH: KAREN MINASYAN/AFP/GETTY

Migration
Lampedusa struggles to cope with arrivals
Page 24

Paris or Milan?
Cities vie for Europe's fashion capital crown
Page 25





◀ *Protesters in Yerevan were critical of their prime minister, and of inaction by western governments and Russian peacekeepers*
PHOTOGRAPH: IRAKLI GEDENIDZE/REUTERS



▶ *Damage from Azerbaijani shelling of buildings in Stepanakert, the capital of the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave, which came under attack on Tuesday*
PHOTOGRAPH: ARTSAKH/EPA

"If we had good leadership, we would be able to resist what is happening," said Sarhat Petrosyan, an architect and former member of Pashinyan's government who was out protesting. "All these people are ready to go and fight."

Another protester, Svetlana Abramyan, a pensioner, said: "If he [Pashinyan] can't do anything, he should resign. He's a coward."

Dozens of civilians and troops were killed and wounded in the mountainous South Caucasus region, according to local officials, in what Baku said was an "anti-terrorist operation" to dismantle the longstanding Nagorno-Karabakh government and eliminate "illegal Armenian military formations".

Azerbaijani officials said they had reached a ceasefire agreement involving the withdrawal of all local defence units from Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrender of arms and heavy equipment.

Many in Yerevan believe that Baku's ultimate goal is to "ethnically cleanse" Nagorno-Karabakh, which is internationally recognised as Azerbaijani territory, of its predominantly Armenian population, which is estimated to number about 120,000.

"What is going on is an Armenian genocide," said Yuri, a protester on Republic Square. "It's a genocide in the 21st century."

A total of 36 people were hurt in a night of scuffles between police and protesters in Yerevan, according to the health ministry. Opposition groups say demonstrations will continue in the coming days.

Pashinyan, who led Armenia through its defeat in the second Karabakh war three years ago, made it clear from the start of the fighting that he did not intend to authorise a military intervention to counter the Azerbaijani offensive.

As Russian peacekeepers, believed to number about 2,000 soldiers, appeared either powerless or disinclined to intervene during the 24 hours of conflict, Baku also seemed to rebuff international calls for peace from the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, and other western diplomats.

Some senior Armenian officials have singled out Russian peacekeepers for not doing more to stop the violence.

"If Russia wants to stay in the region then it should take some steps to stop ['ethnic cleansing' and genocide]. If it doesn't stop what is happening then the answer to the question: 'Does Russian want to leave the region?' can only be yes," said the secretary of Armenia's security council, Armen Grigoryan, according to local reports.

At the same time as the protests on Republic Square, a smaller gathering took place on Tuesday night outside the Russian embassy in Yerevan. Several hundred demonstrators chanted "murderers, murderers, murderers!" and blocked Russian diplomats from entering and leaving the building.

"Russia provoked the fighting," said Hayk Hamburbzumyan, a programmer standing outside the embassy. "We want to get rid of the Russians once and for all. In 400 years, this is the first time Russia is not as strong as it was. We have an historic opportunity to get rid of them."

Another protester, Mary Papoyan, said: "They don't want to protect us, they want to control us."

Strong ties between Russia and Armenia have frayed in recent years as Moscow, mired in its own war in Ukraine, has done little to prevent Azerbaijan tightening its grip over Nagorno-Karabakh - including with a nine-month blockade that led to major food shortages.

As tensions rose, Pashinyan appeared to make overtures to the west. Armenia is hosting a rare joint military exercise with the US.

Yerevan's pro-western course has provoked some anger in Moscow, with the head of the state-owned network RT, Margarita Simonyan, asking mockingly on Tuesday: "Aren't Nato protecting you?"

Before the announcement of a ceasefire, the fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh had continued overnight with residents reporting shelling of the enclave's capital, Stepanakert.

Pashinyan's government is likely to be able to withstand protests as it consolidates its control over the security services, according to the Yerevan-based political analyst Tigran Grigoryan.

Any killings or forcible removal of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan would not only be a consequence of Russia's unwillingness to intervene, but a failure of US and EU diplomacy, Grigoryan said.

"Ethnic cleansing is taking place on [Russia's] watch … But if the EU and US don't act, they will lose all their credibility alongside Russia."

Analysis
Pjotr Sauer



Kremlin's inaction a sign it is losing its grip on the region as longtime ally courts the west

When Armenia called on Russia on Tuesday to step in after Azerbaijan launched "anti-terrorist" operations in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, it quickly became evident the 2,000 Russian peacekeepers stationed there would stand aside.

Stationed along the key highway that runs through the contested area, Russian peacekeepers arrived in the region in 2020 under a five-year mandate after Moscow brokered the end of the previous conflict between the two countries.

With a military base in Armenia, Russia has long been the country's security guarantor, including managing tensions over Nagorno-Karabakh, but as Azerbaijan launched its offensive on the mountainous breakaway region, Moscow made clear its troops had no intention of preventing Baku from pounding it.

"As long as the peacekeepers themselves are not threatened by anything, they have no right to use weapons," said the head of Russia's parliamentary defence committee, Andrei Kartapolov. The Kremlin's spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, even appeared to tacitly approve Baku's actions, saying Azerbaijan was acting "on its territory".

Russia's inaction in Nagorno-Karabakh is not new. Distracted by its war in Ukraine, Moscow was mostly passive when Azerbaijan established a new security checkpoint along the Lachin corridor last spring, cutting off the flow of people and goods between Armenia and the region.

"We do not criticise Russian peacekeepers, but we do express concern about their activities, and this concern has longstanding roots," Armenia's prime minister, Nikol Pashinyan, said in January, as tensions between Yerevan and Moscow grew.

The relationship between the two traditional allies has since reached a historic low, as Pashinyan made several moves criticising and distancing his country from Russia while courting influence in the west.

Armenia announced this month it was hosting US soldiers for an unprecedented joint military exercise. It has also sent humanitarian aid to Ukraine, which was delivered personally by Pashinyan's wife, Anna Hakobyan.

Some Russian officials have been gloating over the renewed fighting. Dmitry Medvedev, a former Russian president who is now deputy chair of the country's security council, lashed out at Pashinyan on Telegram for "flirting with Nato" and providing aid to Ukraine. "Guess what fate awaits him …" he said.

Some observers speculated that by forcing Armenia to give up its hold on Nagorno-Karabakh, the Kremlin was looking to weaken or even overthrow Pashinyan.

As news came in yesterday that a ceasefire agreement had been reached a day after Azerbaijan launched its new offensive, Moscow appeared eager to project authority over the negotiations.

"Through the mediation of the command of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, an agreement was reached between the Azerbaijani side and representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh on a complete cessation of hostilities," the defence ministry said.

Peskov also said Vladimir Putin would call Pashinyan, dismissing Armenia's reproaches of Russia as "groundless".

Still, Russia's inability to safeguard Armenia's interests is bound to have lasting consequences on the country's standing in the region.

"If there is a desire to protect, they [Russia] protect, and if they don't want to, they can find a thousand reasons," said the secretary of Armenia's security council, Armen Grigoryan, summing up the mood in Yerevan. Protesters were also heard shouting anti-Kremlin slogans on Tuesday evening as people gathered in the capital's central square.

> *As Azerbaijan launched its offensive on Nagorno-Karabakh, Moscow made clear its troops would not stop Baku from pounding it*

Italy will not be 'Europe's refugee camp', Meloni says after thousands of arrivals

Angela Giuffrida
Lisa O'Carroll *Brussels*

Italy's far-right prime minister has said she will not allow the country to become "Europe's refugee camp", after thousands of people seeking refuge landed on its shores in recent days, prompting France to tighten controls at its border with Italy.

Giorgia Meloni said she would tell the UN general assembly in New York that the huge numbers arriving in Lampedusa, a tiny Sicilian island that for years has been the first port of call for people crossing a perilous stretch of the Mediterranean Sea from north Africa, had placed Italy "under incredible pressure".

Lampedusa has once again become Europe's immigration flashpoint after more than 11,000 people arrived within the last week, while almost 500 people rescued by an NGO ship were taken to Brindisi in Puglia on Tuesday, bringing the number landing in Italy so far this year to over 127,000 - more than double that of the same period in 2022.

The majority of refugees arriving in Lampedusa are transferred to overcrowded reception centres in Sicily. On Monday, hundreds escaped from a centre in Porto Empedocle in a desperate search for food.

Many people try to make their way north to the border with France, where for years French police have used ruthless tactics to make the border crossing impenetrable. France tightened controls on trains running between the Italian border town of Ventimiglia and Cannes as the number of arrivals surged in Lampedusa but denied reports in the Italian press that it had deployed an "antiterrorism" mission to stop people entering the country.

During a visit to Lampedusa on Sunday, Meloni said: "The future of Europe is at stake" unless EU countries worked together to come up with "serious solutions".

Meloni was the key protagonist of a controversial £105m deal signed in July between the EU and Tunisia, from where the vast majority of people are setting off, to stem irregular migration. However, no money has changed hands and the number of people crossing to Italy has risen by almost 70% since the deal was signed.

Last week, a group of MEPs were refused entry to Tunisia, raising fresh concerns about President Kais Saied's commitment to address concerns over human rights abuses. He has previously declared that Tunisia would not be Europe's border guard.

It emerged on Monday that EU member states had expressed "incomprehension" over the circumstances surrounding the Tunisia pact. In a letter, the EU's chief diplomat, Josep Borrell, said EU states had raised their concerns verbally and in writing in July but had not gone public because of the political sensitivity of the issue.

Yesterday the European commissioner for neighbourhood and enlargement, Olivér Várhelyi, said the deal was a good one. "You can't expect to break down the smugglers' network in two months," he told La Stampa in Italy.

Várhelyi said the fruits of the pact were beginning to emerge despite 114,000 arrivals in the first eight months of the year. "In 2022 the Tunisian coastguard intercepted 9,376 migrants; this year we are already at 24,000. Last year, they also rescued 32,459 people at sea, and this year already 50,000," he said.

"They more than doubled their efforts but unfortunately the traffickers quadrupled them or even more."

'Nothing has changed' Island back in spotlight 10 years on from tragedy

Angela Giuffrida
Lampedusa



A wedding in Lampedusa, where 11,000 people have landed in six days, straining its resources
PHOTOGRAPH: ROBERTO SALOMONE/GUARDIAN

Vito Fiorino and his friends were preparing to go fishing after a night spent sleeping on his boat docked off Lampedusa when one, Alessandro, heard piercing screams. It was about 6am on 3 October 2013. The group often ventured out to sea on the boat that Fiorino had brought back to life after moving to the tiny Sicilian island a few years earlier. But they rarely spent the night on it.

"It was a dark night with lots of stars, no wind and a beautiful sea, and so we decided to sleep on the boat, something we hadn't done in years," Fiorino said. "Alessandro got the boat going as dawn broke and after a few metres stopped the engine and asked: 'Did you hear that noise?' He used a Sicilian word which means 'cries of anguish'. There was a huge flock of seagulls so I was convinced that the noise was coming from them."

Instead of fishing, they sailed farther out to sea to explore where the sound was coming from. "After navigating for 800 metres, what I saw in front of me was terrifying," Fiorino said. "There were about 200 people in the sea, screaming and crying for help."

Fiorino's 10-metre boat, called Gama, was the first to arrive on the scene after a flimsy vessel crammed with almost 500 people caught fire and sank not far from the shore of Lampedusa's famed Rabbit beach.

In all, the bodies of 368 people were recovered in what was one of the Mediterranean's worst shipwrecks. With the coastguard ignoring repeated SOS calls, it was also one of the most shameful episodes for Italy, and for the EU.

Lampedusa was for years the first port of call for people making the perilous journey by sea from north Africa. Now, as the 10th anniversary of the tragedy nears, the island and the memories of that night have been thrust back into the spotlight after more than 11,000 people, almost double Lampedusa's population, landed there within six days.

Lives have again been lost. On Saturday, the body of a baby who died shortly after being born onboard a boat carrying 40 passengers was placed in a white coffin and taken to the island's cemetery, where the remains of other people who perished making the journey over the years are buried in unmarked graves. Last week, a five-month-old boy drowned during a rescue operation.



People wait to board a ship that will transfer them to the mainland. Lampedusa has for years been the first port of call for people coming by sea from north Africa



Vito Fiorino, whose fishing boat saved 47 people from the wreck in 2013 before the coastguard arrived

Fiorino and his friends managed to save 47 people from the 2013 shipwreck before the coastguard arrived. When the then prime minister, Enrico Letta, visited the island soon after, he was heckled.

There was a similar reaction on Sunday, when residents disrupted a convoy that was bringing the current prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, and Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, to the island's overcrowded reception centre.

"People are frustrated because in the space of 10 years, nothing has changed," Fiorino said. "We hear a lot of words, but they are all empty."

There had been chaos at the reception centre, which has the capacity to host 400 people, with some sleeping along the rubbish-strewn street that leads up to the facility. "Why is it you people think we don't have a right to refuge or respect?" said Amadou, who was among five young people from the Gambia stranded outside the reception centre on Saturday afternoon. "We are educated, we have studied languages - all we want is a better life."

Residents empathise with the arrivals - they have rallied to provide clothing and food, with restaurants offering meals and one elderly woman cooking for people in her home. But they feel that their own problems, including bad roads, poor waste management and a hospital bereft of a maternity unit, are being ignored as they are left to deal with a phenomenon that is showing no sign of subsiding.

Mariangela Greco, a B&B owner, was among the residents protesting over fears that the island would be transformed into a so-called "tent city", even more so after Meloni's far-right government approved a measure on Monday giving power to officials to detain those turned down for asylum in reception centres for up to 18 months.

"We believe they want to provide tents for 3,000 people - we will not allow it," Greco said. "The island is too small for something so big and [it] will ruin everything - we survive off tourism and fishing, but mostly tourism."

Zelenskiy urges UN security council to limit veto powers

Julian Borger
Washington

Volodymyr Zelenskiy told the UN security council yesterday that the way to bring peace in Ukraine and to prevent further wars of aggression was through fundamental UN reform.

The Ukrainian president argued that the war had demonstrated the need to limit veto power, give the UN general assembly the power to override vetoes and expand the security council's permanent members beyond the current five powers, who acquired their privileged position in the wake of the second world war.

Addressing the UN security council in New York, the Ukrainian president said the fact that Russia - the aggressor state in Ukraine - also had a veto to prevent the security council doing anything to stop the war made a nonsense of the UN.

"All the UN actions, either by the security council or by the general assembly, that could have stopped this aggression are shattered by the privilege granted to the aggressor with this seat," Zelenskiy said.

"We should recognise that the UN finds itself in a deadlock on the matters of aggression. Humankind no longer pins its hopes on the UN when it comes to the defence of the sovereign borders of nations," he added.

In the current system, Zelenskiy said, the search for real solutions had been displaced by "aspirations to compromise with killers".

He laid out proposals for UN reform as part of his 10-point peace plan. He supported a suggestion, which has been championed by France in the past, that in case of "mass atrocities against human rights" the veto powers of the permanent members - Russia, the US, UK, China, and France - should be voluntarily suspended.

Anticipating that Russia would not relinquish its privilege, Zelenskiy argued the UN general assembly should have the power to override a security council veto with a two-thirds majority.

The president also threw his weight behind calls for the expansion of the security council to accommodate more permanent members, giving broader representation for Asia, a seat for the African Union, the Islamic world and Germany.

The deputy prime minister, Oliver Dowden, who was representing the UK at the security council meeting, expressed solidarity with Zelenskiy and the people of Ukraine in their "bravery and with courage".

Ukraine's fight against Russia's aggression was a "fight for the principles upon which the United Nations itself is based", he said.

Over the past year, the US has expressed support for security council reform. It is an issue that drives a wedge between Russia, China and the global south, including fellow members of the Brics group: Brazil, South Africa and India. Moscow and Beijing have historically been opposed to any changes in the status quo that would affect their veto powers.

At the beginning of the session, the Russian permanent representative, Vasily Nebenzya, had challenged Zelenskiy's right to speak first in the council. The Albanian prime minister, Edi Rama, chairing the session, told Nebenzya: "There is a solution. If you agree you will stop the war, President Zelenskiy will not take the floor."

First public cemetery for pets in Spain promises a dignified adiós

Sam Jones
Madrid

The dogs, cats and other scaly, furry and beaked creatures of Andalucía's second-largest city can look forward to a little more dignity in death than eternal rest in a half-forgotten, ash-filled cardboard box, after Málaga city council announced plans for Spain's first public pet cemetery.

According to the council, the "pioneering" facility, due to open later this year, will cost just over €1m (£865,000). Although four Spanish cities already have private pet cemeteries, the council said its public graveyard and crematorium would be something special and was being created to respond to the "growing social sensitivity when it comes to respecting and caring for animals".

"The facility has been built according to sustainability and energy efficiency criteria," the council said, and would include a reception area, a vet's office, a crematorium and a farewell room. "The site will also include a green space where ashes can be deposited, and a burial area."

The cemetery will also offer other services, such as the removal of dead animals and "farewell services".

A basic cremation for an animal weighing up to 30kg will cost €170, while an urn spot or burial plot will cost €250 and will include 10 years' maintenance. The council said it had set its prices after looking into charges across pet cemeteries and crematoriums around the country.

Official figures show there are more than 350,000 registered pets in the province of Málaga, with 100,000 dogs registered in the city alone.



The Fendi show at Milan fashion week yesterday. The week is expected to generate more than €80m for the city's economy, €10m more than it did in February
PHOTOGRAPH: VITTORIO ZUNINO CELOTTO/GETTY IMAGES

Paris v Milan Battle begins for fashion week crown

Jess Cartner-Morley

Over coffee at the Pasticceria Marchesi, *aperitivi* at the Armani hotel's rooftop bar and spaghetti carbonara at the cult restaurant La Latteria, fashion's top brass were gathered to gossip, network and peacock in anticipation of Milan fashion week, which kicked off yesterday.

In Paris, where the shows are over a week away, vast marquees are being built, seating plans drawn up and amended and industrial quantities of champagne chilled.

Will this season be deemed *très chic* or *molto elegante*? The battle is on to be the fashion capital of Europe and, with post-Brexit London losing its edge, it is a two-horse race.

The stakes have never been higher. In an unstable world economy, fashion is proving lucrative; the years since the pandemic have been blockbuster ones for the industry with 95% of luxury brands increasing profits in 2022, according to a Bain & Company report.

Milan is abuzz, awaiting the two hottest designer debuts of the season. The Tom Ford brand enters its post-Ford era this evening, with the first collection since the founder stepped back. His longtime studio right hand, Peter Hawkings, will oversee a show crucial in determining whether the house can survive.

Tomorrow, Sabato De Sarno makes his debut at Gucci. De Sarno is expected to steer the giant of Italian fashion out of its recent gender-fluid kooky maximalism and towards classic luxury and - crucially for the bottom line - must-have shoes and handbags.

95%
Proportion of luxury fashion brands that increased their profits in 2022, according to Bain & Company

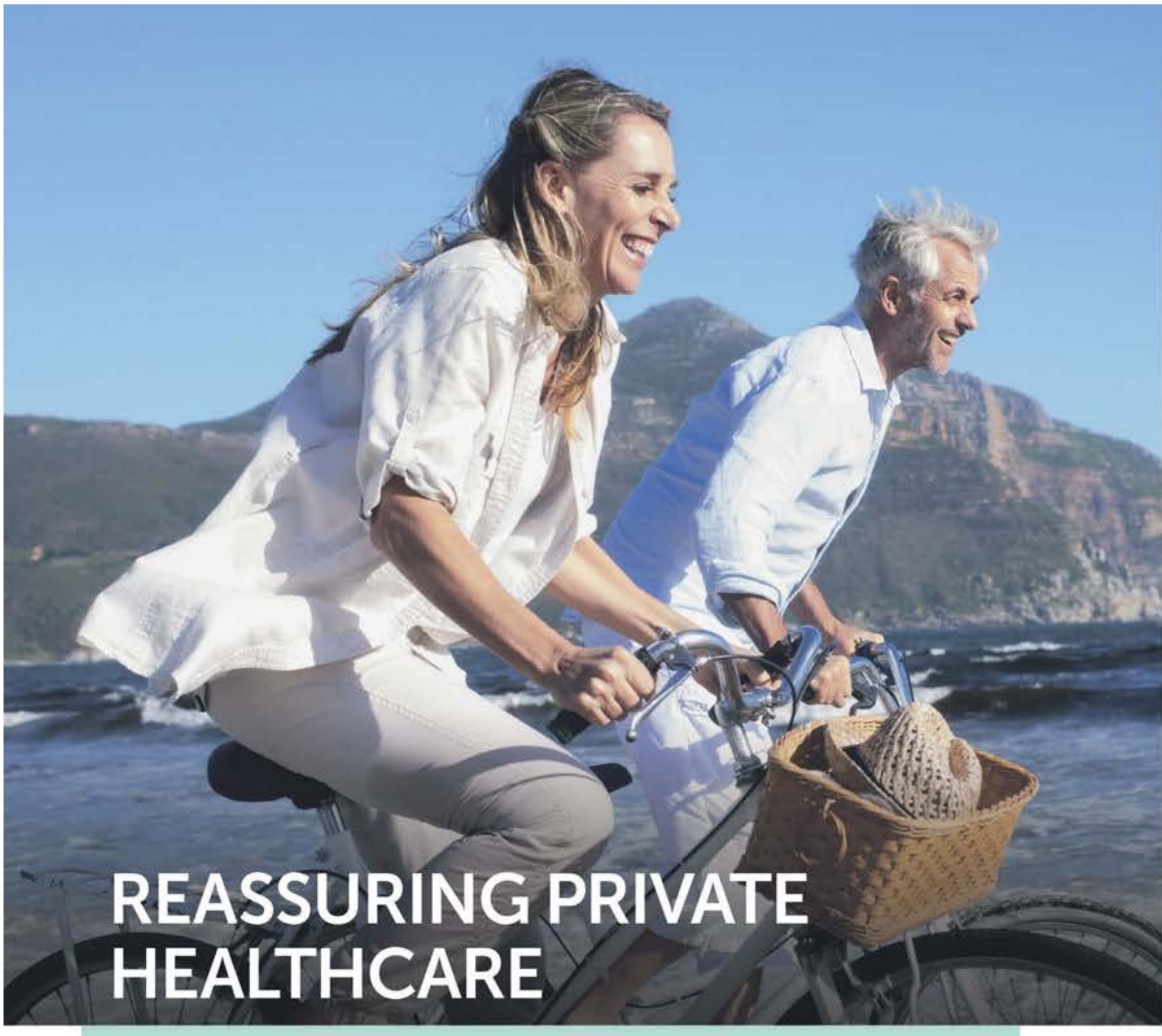
Paris is likely to trump Milan for sheer star power. An effect of the Hollywood strikes looks set to be an abundance of actors not doing their day jobs who can take on modelling or "ambassador" roles for luxury brands. Expect to see Zendaya in attendance at Louis Vuitton, for whom she stars in a new handbag campaign. Margot Robbie, fresh from her Barbie triumph, is a likely guest of honour at Chanel.

Paris is in buoyant mood, with the 2024 Olympics seen as an opportunity for the City of Light to dazzle the world. "The beauty of the city and its culture adds to the myth of Parisian style," said Jeanne Damas, Rouje's creative director.

'The beauty of the city and its culture adds to the myth of Parisian style'
Jeanne Damas
Rouje

Milan may be the underdog in this fight, but it is in the ascendant. Carlo Capasa, the president of Italy's fashion association, estimated that this fashion week will generate more than €80m (£69m) for Milan's economy, a significant step up from €70m in February.

Of last season's shows, Roopal Patel, senior vice-president of the US department store Saks, said: "Milan fashion week can be summed up by four words: sophisticated, chic, elevated and authentic."



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PATIENT STORY

Healthcare screening that puts you in control

Richard Brown
Patient at The London Clinic

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I didn't feel unwell, and I didn't have any symptoms. My condition wouldn't have been picked up until it was either too late, or I may have been too weak to respond as well as I did to chemotherapy treatment resulting in my lymphocyte level returning to normal.

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THE LONDON CLINIC

Paw patrol A Mexican navy dog and the Red Cross take part in the national seismic drill in Mexico City. More than 9 million people across Mexico joined the drill, which happens every 19 September to mark the 1985 and 2017 earthquakes.



PHOTOGRAPH: ISAAC ESQUIVEL/EPA

India warns of 'hate crimes' in Canada as tensions mount

Hannah Ellis-Petersen *Delhi*
Leyland Cecco *Toronto*
Sarah Berman *British Columbia*

The diplomatic row between India and Canada over the murder of a Sikh activist continued to escalate yesterday as New Delhi warned its nationals of "growing anti-India activities and politically condoned hate crimes" in Canada.

Justin Trudeau claimed on Monday that there were "credible allegations" the Indian government had played a role in the assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was connected to a Sikh separatist movement, in British Columbia in June.

After rejecting Trudeau's claims yesterday, India's foreign ministry urged its citizens based in Canada to "exercise extreme caution and remain vigilant", alleging that there was a "deteriorating security environment" in the country that could put the tens of thousands of Indian students at risk.

There are more than 300,000 Indian students studying in Canada, its largest contingent of overseas students. Indian nationals living in Canada have also been advised to register with the consulate.

The warning came after Canada updated its own travel advisory for India, informing Canadian citizens to "exercise a high degree of caution" while travelling to India owing to the "threat of terrorist attack throughout the country".

The spat over travel advisories was the latest strain on diplomatic ties between India and Canada, which are acknowledged to have plunged to their worst since the 1980s.

Trudeau was sidelined at the G20 leaders' summit in Delhi this month, where he had met the Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi, and directly raised allegations of the involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Nijjar.

Modi had then reprimanded Trudeau for allowing extremists associated with the Khalistan movement - which fights for an independent Sikh state in the Punjab region - to operate freely on Canadian soil.

After Trudeau went public with the allegation of Nijjar's assassination, the two countries had engaged in a tit-for-tat expulsion of senior diplomats.

While Canada has said it has sought India's help in investigating the circumstances around Nijjar's killing, the Indian government showed little sign of being willing to cooperate with the investigation. Yesterday, India's national investigation agency released its own list of individuals in Canada it alleged had "terrorist" links to the Khalistan movement.

Politicians on all sides in India condemned Trudeau's allegations.

Canadian officials have so far not disclosed any evidence for the allegations, prompting angry demands by Indian columnists and politicians that it should be made public.

Colleagues who worked alongside Nijjar before he was shot dead said the link between India and the assassination was clear.

"We're not surprised," said Gurkeerat Singh, a volunteer at the temple in Surrey, British Columbia, that Nijjar led from 2019 until his death. "The whole community knew who was behind it. We knew that Hardeep Singh Nijjar could be targeted by the Indian state for his role as a community leader advocating for human rights and for a separate Sikh state."

Analysis Murder accusation comes at tricky time for Trudeau's allies



Canada's accusation on Monday that India may have been behind the car-park murder of the Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June - which New Delhi rejects - comes at an unwelcome time for Britain, the US and Australia.

London, Washington and Canberra have all been prioritising closer ties with India, seeing it not just as a strategic bulwark against the fast-rising China, but as a key partner in the economic isolation of Russia following the invasion of Ukraine.

For the moment, it is easy for the western nations to adopt "a wait-and-watch approach", according to Viraj Solanki, a south Asia analyst at the IISS thinktank, marking time until Canada's investigation becomes clearer. "They will want to see how the situation develops, and engage with both countries in private," he added.

A complicating factor is that the close Five Eyes relationship means Britain, the US and Australia are likely to have a clearer picture of the evidence and intelligence that Canada is relying on behind the scenes. Whatever that is, it was already sufficiently strong for Justin Trudeau, Canada's prime minister, to say there were "credible allegations of a potential link" to Indian government agents - although he was diplomatic enough to wait until a week after his visit to the G20 summit in Delhi before going public.

The question is what lies ahead. If it were publicly proved that the Indian state was behind the killing of Nijjar in a western country, it would be, according to Chietigj Bajpaee, a south Asia expert with the Chatham House thinktank, a gamechanger, placing India in a rather different club of countries.

"India wants to be seen as a responsible global power and the voice of the global south. The last thing it should want is to be associated with regimes like Saudi Arabia, accused of the killing of Jamal Khashoggi, and Russia, perpetrator of the Salisbury poisonings," the analyst said.
Dan Sabbagh

In brief

Iran

Tougher punishment for hijab rule-breakers

Iran's parliament has approved a bill under which women face up to 10 years in prison if they continue to defy the mandatory hijab rules.

As well as the harsher penalties, the legislation intends to identify those who promote "nudity" or "indecency", or to "mock" the rules. UN human rights experts said it was an attempt to force women into "total submission".

The bill, passed with 152 votes in favour and 34 against, needs final approval from the Guardian Council before a three-year trial. The vote came days after the anniversary of the death of Mahsa Amini, 22, in custody. **Deepa Parent**

United States

Art returned to heirs of owner killed by Nazis

Seven artworks by Egon Schiele held in the US are to be handed back to the heirs of a Jewish cabaret star who owned them before being killed in Dachau concentration camp, Manhattan prosecutors announced yesterday.

The works by the Austrian expressionist were scheduled to be ceremonially returned to the heirs of the Holocaust victim Fritz Grünbaum in Manhattan yesterday, the New York Times reported.

Valued at between $780,000 (£628,000) and $2.75m apiece, the works were held by museums and two private collectors.
Philip Oltermann

Galápagos Islands

Biosecurity tightened after avian flu deaths

National park authorities on the Galápagos Islands have heightened biosecurity measures to protect the archipelago's unique fauna from the deadly H5N1 strain of avian influenza after scientists confirmed three birds had died from the virus.

"From preliminary tests of the five specimens, three of them have tested positive for H5N1 avian influenza," Danny Rueda, the director of the Galápagos national park, said. Two frigate birds and one red-footed booby were confirmed to have died on Tuesday. Scientists say the virus was probably brought to the islands by migratory birds. **Dan Collyns** *Lima*



Business

Unexpected fall in inflation leaves Bank with knife-edge decision on borrowing costs

Richard Partington
Economics correspondent

The Bank of England is facing a knife-edge decision on interest rates after an unexpected fall in UK inflation last month, as financial markets bet the central bank could leave borrowing costs unchanged for the first time in almost two years.

In a crunch week for the economy, the August figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) yesterday saw financial markets revise their forecasts, raising the chance of the central bank keeping interest rates on hold from 20% to more than 50%.

The UK's annual inflation rate slowed to 6.7% last month amid weaker growth in food prices and monthly falls in the cost of hotels and air travel. Threadneedle Street, City economists and the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, had anticipated a modest increase to 7% driven by rising petrol and diesel prices.

The latest drop in the inflation reading from 6.8% in July marks the sixth straight decline in the headline rate. It does not, however, mean that prices are falling, only that they are rising at a slower pace.

Underlining the pressure on households of the cost of living crisis, food and drink prices increased by 13.6% in the year to August, lower than their peak inflation rate of 19.1% earlier this year but still high by historical levels.

> *'Previous rate rises are working. If the medicine is working, you need to avoid risking an overdose'*
>
> **Kitty Ussher**
> *Institute of Directors*

The expectation had been of a 15th consecutive rise in interest rates today, with a quarter-point increase to push inflation back towards the Bank's 2% target.

However, with the central bank lending rate already at 5.25%, business leaders warned against pushing through a further increase as concerns mount over the strength of the economy. Private sector activity has cooled in recent months amid weaker levels of consumer spending and with companies facing higher borrowing costs. Figures from the jobs market also show a rise in unemployment and fewer vacancies.

"There are a number of red warning lights on the dashboard," said Kitty Ussher, the chief economist at the Institute of Directors. "Previous rate rises are working to tackle inflation. And if the medicine is working, you need to give it time to avoid risking an overdose."

The ONS said the largest impact on food and drink inflation was from milk, cheese and eggs, for which prices fell sharply between July and August, but they were still up by about 15% compared with a year ago. The cost of vegetables and seafood also fell.

Core inflation – which excludes energy, food, alcohol and tobacco – fell by more than expected, from 6.9% in July to 6.2% in August, driven by lower services prices. Figures for core inflation and the service sector are watched closely by the Bank when determining interest rates.

Threadneedle Street had said last month it expected inflation to rise slightly in August before falling sharply to about 5% in October.

James Smith, an economist at the Dutch bank ING, said: "We're still tempted to say the Bank of England will hike rates. But it's a close call, and both wage and inflation data suggest the end of the current tightening cycle is very close to its conclusion."

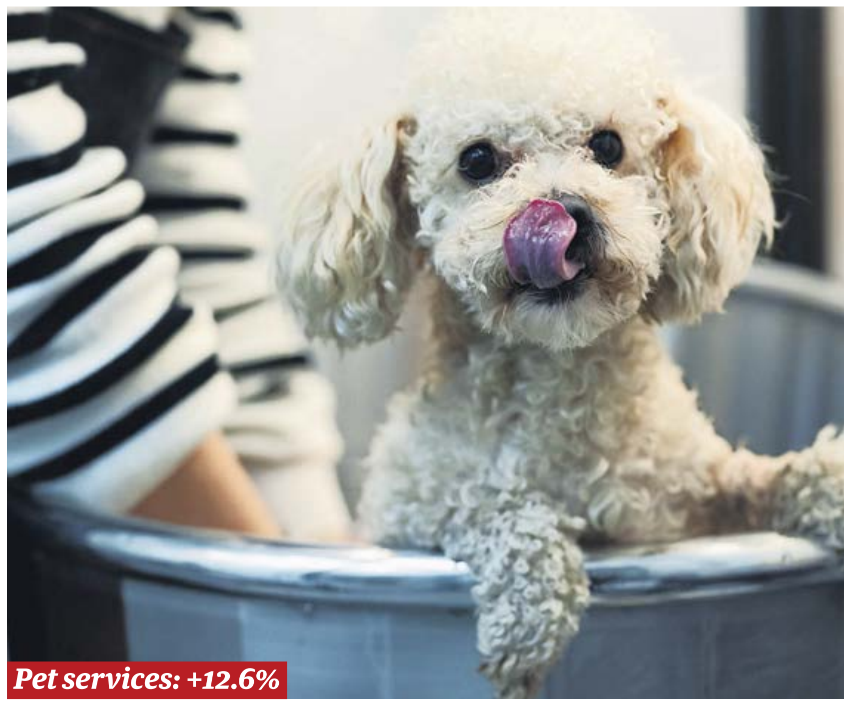
Hunt said the latest inflation figures showed the government's plan was working. "But it is still too high, which is why it is all the more important to stick to our plan to halve it so we can ease the pressure on families and businesses. It is also the only path to sustainably higher growth," the chancellor said.

Despite the latest fall in inflation, the UK still has the highest rate among G7 economies.

Annual price changes to August



Women's clothing: +7.3%



Pet services: +12.6%

Federal Reserve leaves rates unchanged at 22-year high

Dominic Rushe
New York

The Federal Reserve announced it was leaving its benchmark interest rate unchanged at a 22-year high yesterday but signalled it could increase rates again in its fight to bring down inflation.

After a two-day meeting the Fed announced its federal funds rate would remain in a range of 5.25 to 5.5% – the same level as the central bank announced in July, when it last raised rates.

The decision marked the second time this year that the Fed has left interest rates unchanged as it assesses the impact of previous rises on inflation and the wider economy.

The Fed has been increasing rates at their fastest pace since the 1980s in an attempt to bring down US inflation. Rates have risen 11 times since March 2022 from near zero.

Inflation, which soared after the Covid lockdowns ended, has fallen sharply from an annual rate of 9.1% in June 2022. But the August figure, at 3.7%, remains well above the Fed's target of 2% and there are signs that prices in the US could rise again.

> **5.5%**
> *Upper range of the federal funds interest rate, left unchanged by the Federal Reserve at a 22-year high*
>
> **3.7%**
> *Annual US inflation rate reported in August, the first monthly rise since June 2022, when it was 9.1%*

Oil prices have been rising, driven up by cuts in supplies from Saudi Arabia and Russia. The benchmark price of Brent crude is now close to $100 (£80) a barrel, posing a new challenge in the battle against inflation.

In August, US inflation increased for the first time since June 2022, with energy price rises accounting for most of the rise.

The price of energy commodities, including gas and oil, jumped up 10.5% over the last month.

The Federal Reserve chair, Jerome Powell, has repeatedly said that the central bank will hold rates at their current level or increase them until inflation is under control.

Speaking at the Jackson Hole meeting of central bankers last month, Powell said the Fed would "proceed carefully" but would "keep at it until the job is done".

Interest rates

Don't expect policymakers to heed pleas for restraint

Phillip Inman

The UK's inflation rate has come in lower than expected at 6.7%, but it still seems highly probable that the Bank of England will raise interest rates again today.

Not for the first time, central bank policymakers could end up disregarding the warnings from business groups and economists about the long-lasting damage that further fiscal tightening poses to an already weakened economy.

Minutes after the latest official data revealed August's reading had bucked market forecasts of a rise to 7%, the Institute of Directors and the Federation of Small Businesses called on the Bank rate setters to sit on their hands rather than risk a rise in corporate bankruptcies and unemployment.

They said the downward trend in inflation since February showed that the 14 consecutive interest rate rises so far were already working. The money markets agreed that a further increase may no longer be necessary, shaving their bets that a quarter-point rise to 5.5% would go ahead from about an 80% likelihood to just 47%.

Despite those improved odds, the monetary policy committee is

FTSE 100	All share	Dow Indl	Nikkei 225	£/€	£/$
+71.45	+42.32	+231.14	-218.81	1.1566	1.2399
7731.65	4197.78	34748.87	33023.78	-0.0035	-0.0003





likely to ignore pleas for restraint after the body that advises central bank policymakers, the Bank for International Settlements, said this week that interest rates must be used aggressively to bring inflation down permanently.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Monetary Fund also subscribe to this view, and this international economic consensus is likely to prove decisive when Threadneedle Street decides on borrowing costs today.

Yet the Bank's concern about the need to raise rates to tackle stubbornly high core inflation, which strips out volatile elements such as food and fuel, is looking outdated: annual core inflation was 6.2% last month, down from 6.9% in July. The key measure of domestic inflation, the all-services index, also dropped significantly, from 7.4% in July to 6.8% in August.

Much of the downward effect to the headline 6.7% figure came from sectors of the economy that kept inflation high for much of the year. Restaurants and hotels cut prices month on month and shops selling food and non-alcoholic beverages did the same, bringing the annual inflation rate for both down by more than expected.

Recreation and culture also fell, only partly offset by upward contributions from higher oil prices that pushed up the cost of transport.

Suren Thiru, the economics director at the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, said further interest rate rises would be a "misstep" and "additional tightening" risked aggravating the financial struggles facing households and businesses.

The worry for business leaders must be that while inflation remains much higher than the Bank's target, further interest rate rises will not only bring prices crashing down, they will bring the rest of the economy to its knees.

Recent research by the British Chambers of Commerce found almost half of companies reported that current interest rates were having a negative impact.

Martin McTague, the national chair of the Federation of Small Businesses, spoke on behalf of many when he said: "With signs that interest rate rises are starting to bite, [the] base rate decision by the Bank of England has to be the peak for rates, one way or another. Leaving rates high for longer than needed will devastate the chances of an economic recovery."

Regardless of the fate of interest rates, yesterday's inflation figure is good news for Rishi Sunak, who is on track to hit the target he set in early January of halving inflation from 10.7% by they end of this year.

Sanjay Raja, the chief UK economist at Deutsche Bank, said he expected inflation to continue the march downwards during the autumn and winter to average 4.5% in the fourth quarter.

Business briefing
Nils Pratley



Sunak's climate flip-flop could prove costly if it deters foreign investors

One can understand why Rishi Sunak sees political opportunity in watering down a few climate policies. Previous soundbites about "the economic opportunity of the 21st century" may be correct in the round, but voters have also noticed that heat pumps are expensive and that the path to net zero by 2050 involves costs as well as opportunities. A strategy that claims, in effect, that net zero can be delivered more gently is not absurd for a party that is miles behind in the polls.

The problem, though, is the one highlighted by the furious reaction from some carmakers, in particular, to Sunak's flip-flop. Any realistic route to net zero involves winning, and keeping, the broad confidence of businesses that will be overhauling the infrastructure. At one level, hitting the 2050 target requires an enormous public-private effort to rewire the entire economy. The whole point of setting interim targets is to make it more likely that you hit the main end-goal. Presented with a legally binding commitment, the government risks looking incapable of delivering a plan that it can stick to.

The former Siemens UK chief executive Juergen Maier spoke about "a disaster for business confidence and investment" and one can understand why. The phasing out of sales of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030 was a policy adopted as recently as November 2020, which is hardly another age. Sunak was chancellor at the time.

Manufacturing investment decisions were made on the assumption that the deadline was solid. Veering to 2035 (never mind what the European Union is doing) feels perverse when the government is simultaneously throwing subsidies at Mini and Jaguar Land Rover to crank up their electric vehicle ambitions in the UK.

It was a similar story with the offshore wind auction a fortnight ago. In that case, the (still intact) goal is to have 50 gigawatts of capacity installed by 2030, which requires a tripling of what the UK already has. The auction, however, delivered precisely zero bids because the government's maximum price for contracts was set at an unrealistically low level.

In attempting to signal pragmatism, the prime minister may send the message that the government's targets cannot be relied upon

One can grumble about offshore developers' greed (some have had a spectacularly good ride in the past) but inflation in construction costs was undeniable on this occasion. The government's inflexible approach also looked counterproductive in its own terms if the 50GW target is to be hit. Developers next year will have a stronger negotiating hand in an auction in which the government is obliged to land more bids. A "pragmatic, proportionate and realistic" approach, to quote Sunak yesterday, would have been to try to smooth the bumps in the interests of steady delivery.

Business won't hate everything in this reset, of course. If a "fast track" to improve connections to the grid is confirmation that decarbonisation of the power sector will happen by 2035, that is significant. But consistency in policymaking matters. In attempting to signal pragmatism, Sunak may send the message that UK targets cannot be relied upon. A lot of foreign capital is required to deliver transition and investors may fairly wonder if more U-turns are coming.


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Merger talks with Make UK halted as crisis-hit CBI plans member bailout

Anna Isaac
Kalyeena Makortoff

The Confederation of British Industry, one of the UK's largest business lobby groups, has shelved plans for a tie-up with the manufacturing body Make UK, telling members it was confident that an alternative emergency cash rescue would be found.

A call with the CBI president, Brian McBride, and its director general, Rain Newton-Smith, yesterday replaced its scheduled annual general meeting at less than 24 hours' notice. The change of plan came after a £3m cashflow shortfall prevented the CBI from presenting its financial statements to its members as planned.

Sources familiar with the broadcast discussion said the aim was to "project a strong impression of confidence" to the membership, even if that did not reflect a "level of certainty that was universally felt" by senior figures at the lobby group.

Hopes for survival were being pinned on a member-led bailout of the CBI, as plans for a tie-up with Make UK, which lobbies on behalf of manufacturers, were shelved, the Guardian learned.



◀ *The business lobby group told members it was confident of an emergency cash rescue*
PHOTOGRAPH: LEON NEAL/GETTY IMAGES

Talks over a coordinated package of short-term financing were being spearheaded by its banking members. HSBC, NatWest and Lloyds had engaged the CBI's "senior alumni network", sources said. All three banks declined to comment on the talks.

The CBI is in crisis because nearly 100 British companies have paused or suspended their membership since April, when the Guardian reported allegations of sexual attacks and sexual harassment of staff by senior figures. Those who cut ties included the carmakers BMW, Ford and Jaguar Land Rover; the supermarkets Tesco and Sainsbury's; the asset managers Aviva, Fidelity and Schroders; the US banks Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan; and the oil firms Shell and BP.

The government and the Labour party also paused contact with the organisation, hampering its ability to represent businesses, although communications later resumed.

With the political party conference season fast approaching, efforts were being made by rival groups to position themselves as an alternative national voice for business.

The British Chambers of Commerce has formed a new business council in an attempt to influence economic policy as well as political party manifestos before the next general election. It held its inaugural meeting last week, attended by the levelling up secretary, Michael Gove, and the shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves.

The council comprises 13 major UK firms, including FTSE 100 firms such as Aviva, BP and Heathrow, which quit the CBI or suspended their membership in protest this year.

NatWest is considering whether to rejoin the CBI, after the bank's former chief executive Alison Rose, who resigned unexpectedly last month, made a decision to cancel its membership in April.

Sir Howard Davies, the chair of NatWest, is a former director general of the CBI. Carolyn Fairbairn, also a former head of the CBI, is now on the board of HSBC as an independent non-executive director, and previously served on the board of Lloyds.

The CBI needs to find nearly £3m by mid-October in order to meet its financial obligations, including paying staff. No members had yet "signed a cheque" but talks were "positive", sources said.

A CBI spokesperson did not directly address whether Make UK talks were sidelined for now, instead saying a "viable option exists for closer collaboration in the future".

Yesterday's online call with members was in broadcast mode, with questions carefully selected. No financial statements were presented.

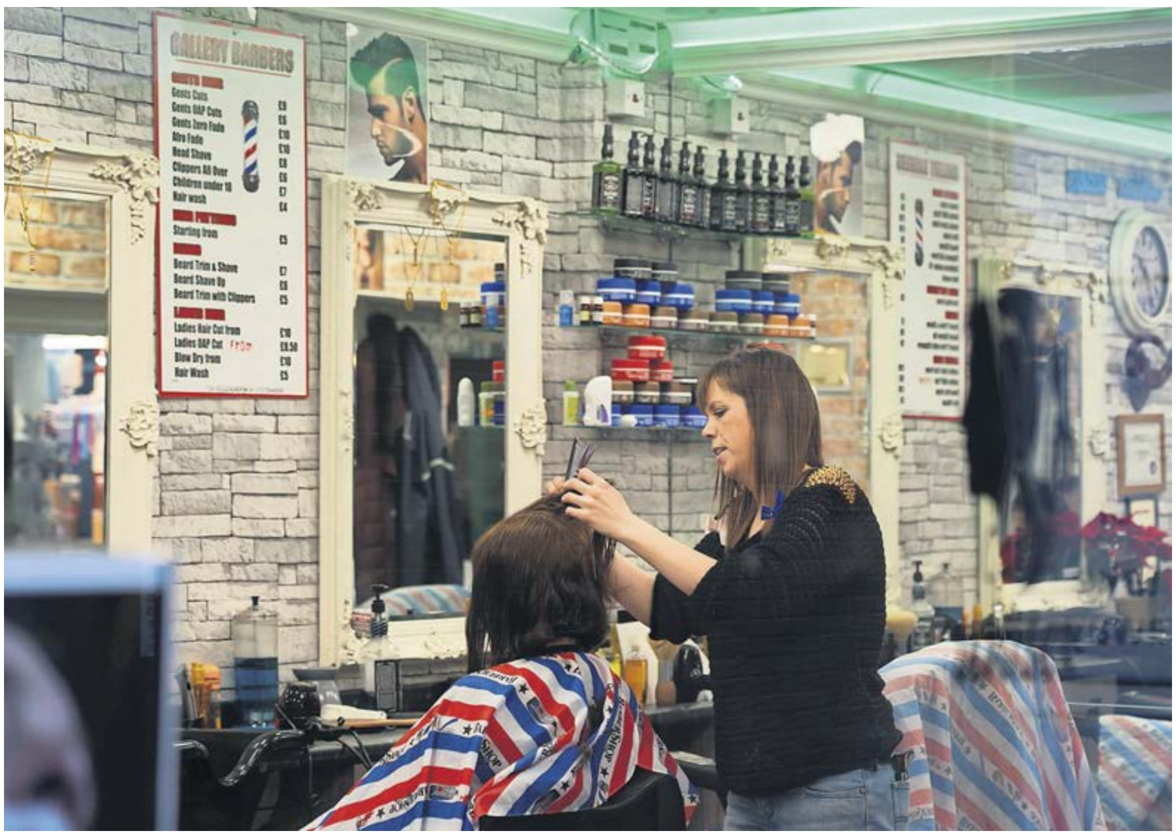
Many expressed frustration with what they regarded as misplaced confidence in the group's finances.

"There are clearly talented and hardworking staff still there, making the most of efforts to rebuild links into government and the opposition, but they are not being well served by a lack of transparency in terms of governance," a CBI member said.

Some former CBI members said they would not rejoin because their trade associations had improved their offerings and were making greater headway with the government and Labour party by raising sectoral issues.

Slump for independent shops as 2,000 more stand empty this year

Sarah Butler



◀ *UK hairdressers were hardest hit by store closures amid rising costs, with a net loss of 389 since 2021*
PHOTOGRAPH: STEVEN GILL/ALAMY

Almost 2,000 more British independent stores were left empty in the first half of this year, as small businesses struggled to cope with rising inflation and the cost of living crisis.

The biggest rise in vacancies for at least eight years marks a reversal in fortunes for independent outlets after two years of growth. Small firms had thrived from a shift towards local shopping prompted by Covid, and were also helped by government support on rent and business rates.

The loss of 1,915 outlets across high streets, shopping centres and retail parks this year unwinds most of the 1,335 net openings in the first half of last year and 804 during the same period in 2021, according to research by the Local Data Company (LDC) and seen by the Guardian.

Hairdressers were the hardest hit, according to the LDC, with a net loss of 389 businesses. Estate agents, pubs, fish and chip shops, florists, butchers, newsagents and car dealerships also suffered. However, the number of barbers, beauty salons and convenience stores continued to expand as sales were increased by demand for cheap treats after the return to offices, schools and socialising. Independent vape shops and health clubs are also thriving.

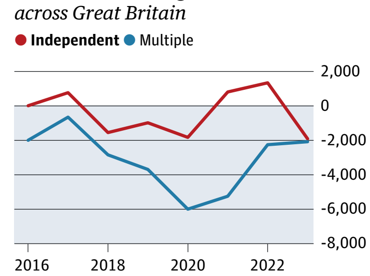
The north-east of England and Yorkshire were the worst-hit regions for independent closures, while Greater London fared the best.

Lucy Stainton, the commercial director of the LDC, said: "In this year's macroeconomic environment, it's our independent businesses that have suffered, especially those high-energy-consuming businesses such as hairdressers and pubs.

"We have also seen a decline in independent estate agents as the housing market slowed against a backdrop of rising interest rates. And with newsagents struggling to compete with the increase in convenience stores and their broader offering, this was another subsector to struggle in the first half."

Stainton said the slew of independent businesses that opened during the pandemic were less likely to have the cash reserves to withstand the economic challenges of high cost inflation and tightening consumer spending, especially as they have not been trading for very long. Their difficulties have been worsened by a slowdown in government support.

The number of independent store vacancies has risen
Historical net change in units across Great Britain



Source: Local Data Company

Martin McTague, the national chair of the Federation of Small Businesses, said: "We saw a flourishing of new businesses conceived during the pandemic, which was a real bright spot in a turbulent time, as people suddenly had a chance to put long-held dreams or flashes of inspiration into practice.

"These new additions helped to counterbalance the businesses that sadly had to close as the economic disruption took its toll. News that many of these newer businesses in turn are encountering difficult trading conditions is worrying but not surprising given the huge challenges facing the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors."

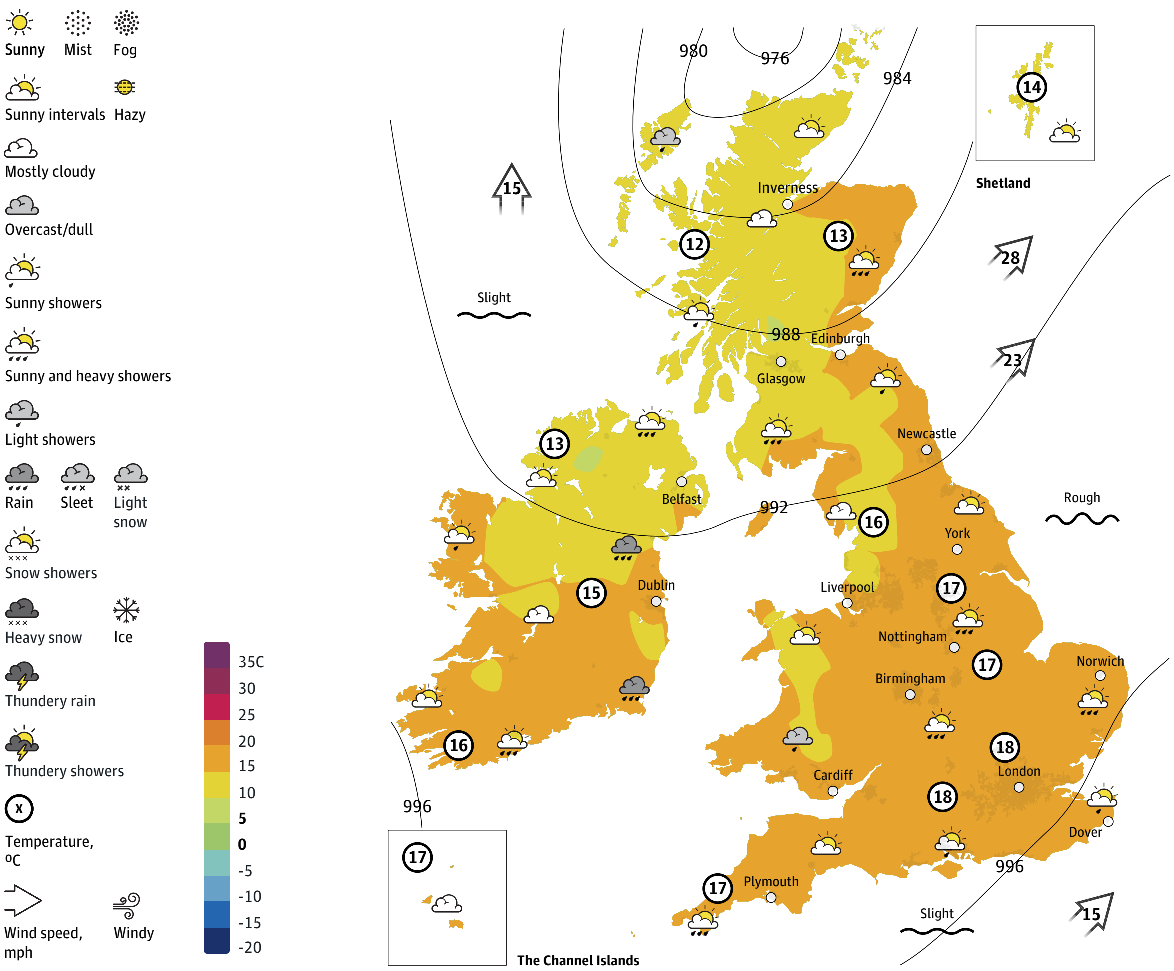
Meanwhile, it emerged that a net total of 2,000 more chain stores had been left vacant in the first half of this year, a similar number to a year before. In all, there are 4,000 more vacancies in shopping destinations than last year, taking the vacancy rate to 13.9%, up from 13.8% a year ago.

The LDC found that there had been a 27% rise in retail and leisure sites being demolished for redevelopment, reflecting an increasing effort to repurpose space that has been vacant for long periods.

There is more work to do, with 41% of Debenhams stores still vacant and with no confirmed plans. The collapse of the budget chain Wilko last month is also expected to leave more gaps on Britain's high streets.

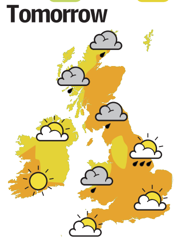
Weather
Thursday 21 September 2023

UK and Ireland Noon today

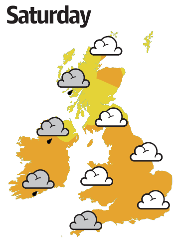


Forecast

Low 7 High 14
Tomorrow



Low 8 High 15
Saturday



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

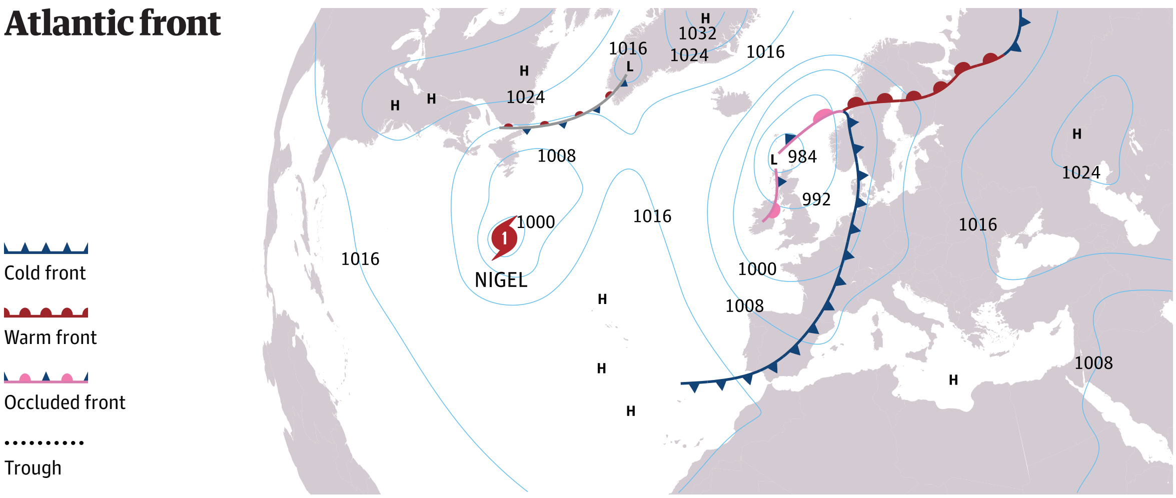
Latest	
17 Sep 2023	418.72
Weekly average	
10 Sep 2023	418.52
20 Sep 2022	416.15
20 Sep 2013	393.52
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

	Lows and highs		Precipitation	Air pollution
London	9	18	85%	Low
Manchester	7	16	65%	Low
Edinburgh	8	15	15%	Low
Belfast	9	13	65%	Low
Birmingham	6	17	10%	Low
Brighton	11	18	80%	Low
Bristol	10	16	80%	Low
Cardiff	10	16	90%	Low
Newcastle	7	16	25%	Low
Penzance	12	16	85%	Low

Atlantic front

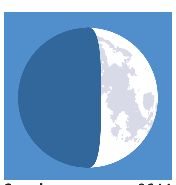


High tides

Source: © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Times are local UK times

Aberdeen	**0534**	3.9m	**1800**	3.7m
Avonmouth	**1124**	11.4m	**2344**	11.2m
Barrow	**0330**	8.4m	**1553**	8.1m
Belfast	**0316**	3.4m	**1532**	3.2m
Cobh	**0940**	3.7m	**2201**	3.6m
Cromer	**1030**	4.6m	**2305**	4.3m
Dover	**0249**	6.3m	**1511**	6.3m
Dublin	**0352**	3.7m	**1618**	3.6m
Galway	**0934**	4.3m	**2158**	4.2m
Greenock	**0435**	3.5m	**1657**	3.2m
Harwich	**0355**	3.7m	**1603**	3.8m
Holyhead	**0219**	5.1m	**1445**	4.9m
Hull	**1036**	6.7m	**2257**	6.4m
Leith	**0657**	5.0m	**1923**	4.8m
Liverpool	**0259**	8.4m	**1525**	8.2m
London Bridge	**0559**	6.3m	**1819**	6.5m
Lossiemouth	**0356**	3.7m	**1620**	3.5m
Milford Haven	**1023**	6.1m	**2242**	5.9m
Newquay	**0916**	6.1m	**2136**	6.0m
North Shields	**0736**	4.6m	**2004**	4.4m
Oban	**0948**	3.4m	**2155**	3.3m
Penzance	**0847**	4.9m	**2103**	4.8m
Plymouth	**0953**	4.8m	**2209**	4.7m
Portsmouth	**0326**	4.3m	**1550**	4.3m
Southport	**0226**	8.1m	**1445**	7.9m
Stornoway	**1109**	4.0m	**2321**	3.9m
Weymouth	**1010**	1.0m	**2230**	0.8m
Whitby	**0812**	5.1m	**2039**	4.9m
Wick	**0326**	3.1m	**1550**	3.0m
Workington	**0328**	7.5m	**1552**	7.3m

Sun & Moon



Sun rises	0644
Sun sets	1901
Moon rises	1414
Moon sets	2118
First Quarter	22 Sept

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2023

Lighting up

Belfast	1927 to 0710
Birm'ham	1909 to 0652
Brighton	1902 to 0646
Bristol	1912 to 0656
Carlisle	1913 to 0656
Cork	1935 to 0719
Dublin	1927 to 0710
Glasgow	1920 to 0702
Harlech	1918 to 0702
Inverness	1919 to 0700
London	1901 to 0645
M'chester	1911 to 0654
Newcastle	1909 to 0652
Norwich	1857 to 0640
Penzance	1923 to 0708

Weatherwatch

It has been a good autumn for seabird enthusiasts, especially those taking boat trips, known as "pelagics", off the Isles of Scilly.

Among the usual sightings, a selection of shearwaters and storm petrels, came a real rarity: a south polar skua. As its name suggests, this species breeds at the opposite end of Earth to Britain, and has been recorded here only a handful of times.

Two weeks later, lightning struck twice. Britain's second ever red-footed booby – a relative of the gannet – was also seen on a Scilly pelagic. Unlike most rare seabirds, which are seen only briefly as they pass through our coastal waters, this individual delighted birders by regularly roosting on Bishop Rock lighthouse, to the west of Scilly.

Red-footed boobies breed on tropical islands and oceanic atolls, and although they do wander farther afield, they are rarely seen in temperate seas. As the British Trust for Ornithology has suggested, unusually warm weather conditions – almost certainly triggered by the current El Niño event – are the likeliest explanation for an increase in sightings. Whether this is a one-off, or a sign of the climate crisis, may be too early to tell. **Stephen Moss**

Around the world

Algiers	29	Lisbon	22
Ams'dam	18	Madrid	18
Athens	28	Malaga	29
Auckland	19	Melb'rne	16
B Aires	20	Mexico C	27
Bangkok	35	Miami	31
Barcelona	26	Milan	23
Basra	44	Mombasa	30
Beijing	27	Moscow	19
Berlin	27	Mumbai	31
Bermuda	27	N Orleans	31
Brussels	18	Nairobi	27
Budapest	26	New Delhi	33
C'hagen	22	New York	23
Cairo	32	Oslo	18
Cape Town	17	Paris	18
Chicago	25	Perth	24
Corfu	30	Prague	25
Dakar	32	Reykjavik	10
Dhaka	31	Rio de J	28
Dublin	15	Rome	26
Florence	26	Shanghai	27
Gibraltar	25	Singapore	31
H Kong	33	Stockh'm	20
Harare	32	Strasb'g	26
Helsinki	20	Sydney	22
Istanbul	26	Tel Aviv	30
Jo'burg	27	Tenerife	28
K Lumpur	31	Tokyo	30
K'mandu	29	Toronto	21
Kabul	29	Vancouv'r	18
Kingston	33	Vienna	27
Kolkata	31	Warsaw	26
L Angeles	21	Wash'ton	27
Lagos	30	Well'ton	18
Lima	22	Zurich	24

Rugby union
Jack Willis out to seize chance in 'home' World Cup
Page 34 →

Golf
Solheim captain rues missed trick in Ryder Cup year
Page 35 →



Sport



▲ *Kaoru Mitoma (centre) and his Brighton teammates prepare for tonight's Europa League match*
MATTHEW CHILDS/ACTION IMAGES/REUTERS

Risky business

Brighton in full Bloom and ready for Europe thanks to 'the Lizard'

Ed Aarons



They don't call Tony Bloom "the Lizard" for no reason. The Brighton owner has earned almost $4m as a cold-blooded poker player and will be the proudest man in the Amex Stadium tonight when the team he rescued from the brink of extinction in 2009 make their debut on the European stage against AEK Athens.

After a three-year absence from the poker table, Bloom – who is said to have spent countless hours at the amusement arcades on Brighton pier as a child before studying maths at university and establishing his gambling empire – returned last year and won $360,000 (£290,000) in prize money. "I've always enjoyed playing poker, but life sometimes ... there's a lot going on with business, the football club and a young family," he said. "I just heard about this tournament three days ago and pot-limit Omaha is my favourite game. Tough field, but I said I'll give it a go."

Bloom was also reported to have pocketed more than £800,000 after betting on his horse Energumene to win the Queen Mother Champion Chase for the second year running at Cheltenham in March and owns a betting consultancy firm called Starlizard, which is believed to have an annual turnover of more than £100m.

But Brighton could turn out to be his most lucrative gamble of the lot, after two summers in which the club have banked more than £350m, culminating in the sale of Moisés Caicedo to Chelsea for a British record fee, and still managed to qualify for the Europa League thanks to a sixth-place finish in the Premier League.

Bloom, who grew up watching Brighton with his grandfather Harry (a vice-chairman during the 1970s when Brian Clough had a brief spell as manager), invested £80m in 2009 to help pay for the new stadium that will host AEK and remains the driving force behind the success at a club where there has also been a constant turnover of staff as well as players.

Paul Winstanley, the former head of recruitment who moved to Chelsea with Graham Potter last year, and the Football Association's former director of elite development Dan Ashworth, who is now at Newcastle, helped to build the impressive scouting network that is the envy of the Premier League and beyond. But just as Roberto De Zerbi's side have picked up where they left off last season despite the departures of Caicedo and Alexis Mac Allister, behind the scenes the technical director David Weir and head of recruitment Sam Jewell – who is credited with scouting both players in South America – have seamlessly stepped up.

Bloom remains the constant in Brighton's evolution, with the owner said to have introduced parameters such as rarely spending significant transfer fees on older players. He also has the final say on signings and, as Chelsea and others have discovered, is not the kind of owner to mess with around the negotiating table.

"Poker gives you a good grounding in lots of things, including reading situations and reading people and making tough decisions," Bloom told the Times in a rare interview in 2011. "When it comes to football, people get very emotional and when I'm watching a game, I'm as emotional as the rest of them. But running the football club, it's really important to get that emotion to the back. Otherwise you'll end up doing what a lot of chairmen always do and make some horrendous decisions. I don't quite understand why a lot of successful businessmen get into football clubs and sometimes make a pig's ear of it."

Saturday's fourth consecutive Premier League victory over Manchester United, which featured a mesmeric 30-pass move for the second goal from Pascal Gross, was the latest evidence that Brighton's success is no flash in the pan. The appointment of the effervescent De Zerbi – who marked his first year in charge on Monday – to replace Potter has proved a match made in heaven with Bloom's analytical approach and he has transformed the team into a potent attacking force.

> *Bloom is not the kind of owner to mess with around the negotiating table*

Brighton have registered more shots on target than any other team in the division since his arrival and so committed is the Italian to playing out from the back that Brighton have yet to take a long goalkick this season in the Premier League.

"He's so good at improving players," Bloom said last week. "He pushes everyone to go as far as they can. We don't have ceilings at this club but he certainly doesn't have one." De Zerbi said on Wednesday: "We are not a big, big team yet but we are improving. We have the ambition to become better. How we can compete can give us an upgrade. But we can't forget where we started and who we were. We can't lose our DNA."

It is not only Bloom and De Zerbi who feel Brighton's European adventure may be no one-off. The club are second favourites to win the Europa League with some bookmakers behind Liverpool, and supporters – who are relishing trips to face Marseille and Ajax – have every reason to think there is a good chance of qualifying for next season's expanded Champions League if De Zerbi can sustain their serene progress.

"I never thought when I came here that we could go this far," said Gross, who made his senior debut for Germany this month and was Brighton's first signing in 2017 after they were promoted to the Premier League. "We all know it means a lot to the owner and I think it will be a special night."

Willis determined to show French form in England shirt

Flanker has been a revelation at Toulouse and his focus is on holding down a World Cup place after playing Chile

Gerard Meagher
Nice

Trying to explain to the French rugby public why Jack Willis has been left out of both of England's match-day squads to date at the World Cup is easier said than done.

The openside flanker has proved a revelation since his move to Toulouse last November, helping the club to the Top 14 title. French fans see Toulouse players make up the bulk of *Les Bleus*' side and cannot help but wonder why Willis cannot get into a decidedly inferior England side.

They do not have to wait much longer - Willis is set for his first England appearance against Chile on Saturday - but so far it has been a bit like if Erling Haaland could not make the cut for Norway. Manchester City supporters, you sense, would not find that easy to fathom.

It has been suggested that Willis did himself no favours with his showing against Fiji - not that many of his teammates did - but it cannot have been easy as the "local" in the England squad, having to sit on the sidelines.

"We all want to be involved, as a player you don't want to be running up the touchlines doing fitness sessions, you aspire to be playing in these sorts of big games and that is something that continues among everybody," says Willis. "That drive I would say, but equally when you are not involved, as and when that opportunity comes, you are as ready as you can be."

Willis puts his omission to date down to the fierce competition in the back row - even if Tom Curry's suspension might have opened the door against Japan - but as a breakdown specialist, he can show his worth against Chile. Given England's propensity to kick, winning turnovers can be a valuable asset and there are few better in that area than Willis.

"You'll see an increase in competitiveness at the breakdown," says the 26-year-old. "You saw how much that put off the flow of Australia's game [against Fiji]. The big thing is that it can change depending on the referee and the competition you're playing in.

"Each ref has reffed in a different league for that season, has a different style and you have got to make sure you're adapting as a jackaller specifically; making sure you know their trends, what they look for and that picture.

"I'd always try to work with the analyst to get their last few games, turnovers awarded, penalties given against and try to work towards what I see as trends within that.

"We all know there are some refs that will let the breakdown unfold and talk to you a bit, and there are others that will just want to close that off, and if they see anything untoward will penalise. You can tweak, ref to ref."

The key, however, for Willis and others who will get their chance to impress against Chile with Steve Borthwick set to make a number of changes, is to stick to the script. "I don't think my mindset changes," says Willis. "I grew up as a little boy wanting to play for England and that raw determination has not changed.

'I've had my French taken the mick out of - I try to help when I can and translate minimally'

"I've come back from a couple of injuries that made me think I'll never get this opportunity again and I chuck myself into it as much as I can. Obviously I want to be playing and I want to be featuring, but for me it's 'head down' and be ready for when it comes.

"I don't think I'd find it too difficult. I've spent long [periods of] time not playing rugby, I spent a year out with my knee and, believe me, you think about it a hell of a lot when you're sat with crutches or struggling away with your rehab.

"I just want to make sure if and when I get my opportunity I maximise it to the best of my ability. For me, emotionally, you don't want to build yourself up too much but I think I'd be able to get myself into a good place."

So is a World Cup in France a "home" World Cup for Willis? "I've had my French taken the mick out of a few times, [the squad] just going, 'ello mate, can I have this?' and I try it in French and they're taking the mick out of me. But I try to help when I can and translate minimally when I can.

"I've been welcomed in with open arms at Toulouse and I probably didn't expect that. I was pretty nervous, probably didn't have any expectations. I get a bit of stick for being a *rosbif*.

"I really have enjoyed it and have made some really good mates there. There's a good group of foreigners, as I'm now labelled, as part of the foreigner gang. They have welcomed me and my family as well."



◀ *Jack Willis (right) makes a break past Lewis Ludlam during a training session*
DAN MULLAN/GETTY IMAGES

Irish cool on Springboks' raw power with Sexton at the helm

Ireland's Ryan believes fly-half's presence and 'narky edge' are invaluable for key game against South Africa

Robert Kitson
Tours

It is peaceful on the banks of the Loire, serene enough to lull anyone into a sense of false security. Tours is a lovely, mellow place, with a beguiling old town, and even when journalists arrive too early for Ireland's press conferences in the suburbs there is a patch of nearby woodland where they can sit and listen to the breeze gently rustling the trees. If it feels like the quiet before the storm, that's because it is.

Everyone knows what is coming over the hill in Paris on Saturday night and the collision threatens to be mighty. Every Rugby World Cup has a defining pool fixture and, in many ways, Ireland versus South Africa is that and more. The world's No 1-ranked side against the defending world champions, irresistible force up against largely immovable object. Mellow is not a word that springs instantly to mind.

Particularly so since it was confirmed the Springboks will be donning their full metal jacket. A 7-1 bench loaded with extra slabs of forward muscle has made their intentions crystal clear and dominated the pre-game media agenda. Simon Easterby, the Irish forwards coach, knew what the opening question would be and was not disappointed. "Obviously they believe that's the way they need to set themselves to beat us on Saturday," he replied evenly. "It's a talking point but I don't think it changes anything for us."

Yes and no. It is a major talking point because, despite Ireland's run of 15 consecutive Test victories dating back to their stunning series win against New Zealand last summer, no one specialises in human brick walls quite like South Africa. Eben Etzebeth is back fit and despite the injury absence of Malcolm Marx, there are few obvious weak links within the starting pack or their doubles.

'To be playing in a World Cup at fly-half at 38 and as well as he is … it's pretty ridiculous'



▲ *Johnny Sexton will lead Ireland against South Africa on Saturday*

Either way, neither Easterby nor one of his key forwards, James Ryan, were in the mood for tub-thumping following the squad's final session before heading to Paris for the countdown to kick-off. The nearest they came was when Easterby reminded his audience that Ireland have been building towards this weekend for a good couple of years. "We know that when we play well and we play a certain way that we're going to be difficult to play against and difficult to beat."

They also have a certain Johnny Sexton, whose presence always makes his teammates feel more secure. Easterby was among those who found the fly-half's non-selection for the 2021 British & Irish Lions tour to South Africa "surprising" and reckons his relentless competitiveness is contagious. "As much as you'll see the competitive and the narky edge on match day, he's an unbelievable person around the group. He makes people feel really good about themselves."

Ryan feels similarly, having shared plenty of dressing rooms with him for Leinster and Ireland. "It doesn't matter if it's the first game of the season, a URC [United Rugby Championship] game or if it's the World Cup final. He just shows up every week with the same competitive spirit. He is an unbelievable leader and he makes a big difference to the team when he's in there.

"He probably is a little bit of an inspiration. To be playing in a World Cup at fly-half at 38 and to be playing as well as he is … it is pretty ridiculous. I think it's his competitiveness and drive that allows him to reach and maintain those levels of performance.

"I'm going to get a bit of a slagging for this because I'm bigging him up quite a bit but he's been great." The perfect skipper to have at the helm, in other words, when the storm finally hits.



Juan Ignacio Brex touches down for Italy's fifth try

Pool A

Brex rounds off flurry of tries as Italy battle back

Italy	**38**
Uruguay	**17**

Luke McLaughlin
Stade de Nice

Another commendable Uruguay performance, another established rugby nation given an anxiety-inducing examination. Searching questions were asked, mistakes were forced, and half-time daylight created on the scoreboard for the South Americans.

In the end, Italy earned the right to canter over the line. They eventually wore down Uruguay with tactical kicking, powerful carrying and a willingness to run the ball from all over.

They scored five tries and Tommaso Allan is 13 from 13 off the tee. The road now gets steeper for Italy, with matches against New Zealand and France, but they have a platform.

There would be no excuses here about a slippery ball despite a heavy cloudburst on the Côte d'Azur. From the moment Ange Capuozzo caught the kick off and Italy ran from their own 22, their intentions were clear.

Paolo Garbisi conceded a penalty, missed by Felipe Etcheverry. Lorenzo Pani punished him with the opening score, converted by Allan. Eagerness to run from deep cost Italy when Etcheverry intercepted just outside the 22. The punishment would be a penalty try and yellow cards for Niccolò Cannone and Danilo Fischetti.

It got worse when Etcheverry offloaded to Nicolás Freitas, who darted over. Etcheverry smacked a conversion before belting over a drop goal. The score read 17-7 at half-time and a first bona fide shock beckoned.

The pendulum soon swung back in Italy's favour. Andrés Vilaseca was sent to the sin bin after his shoulder made contact with Pani's head. Lorenzo Cannone was soon crunching into contact before Michele Lamaro powered over. Allan added the extras and Italy led by three points.

Uruguay then shipped tries to Monty Ioane, Lorenzo Cannone and Juan Ignacio Brex. When Paolo Garbisi clipped a penalty with 10 minutes left the scoring was complete.

Golf *Solheim Cup*

Lewis rues Solheim and Ryder Cup disconnect

Ewan Murray
Finca Cortesin

Stacy Lewis, the US captain, has bemoaned the "massive missed opportunity" of golf not promoting back-to-back Solheim and Ryder Cups together. A frustrated Lewis has revealed her pleas for a collective approach between the team events fell on deaf ears.

Europe host the US in the Solheim Cup from tomorrow in Spain. Next weekend, the same entities will face off in Rome for the Ryder Cup. The competitions have no visible link. Scheduling issues created by the pandemic meant this unusual 2023 scenario.

Asked if the approach should have been different, Lewis said: "1,000%, yes. I thought this could have been marketed together as two weeks in Europe, two cups for play. I think it was a missed opportunity.

"I wish that people could get the sponsorship things out of their head and figure out how we can work together because this may not ever happen again, the two cups being in the same year. So I thought it was a massive missed opportunity. We tried to do a little bit with the guys and just weren't really able to move things along the way I would have liked. I just would like to see it for the good of the game."



▲ *Stacy Lewis wanted to see the two competitions marketed together*

The Solheim Cup is the domain of the Ladies European Tour and LPGA Tour. The Ryder Cup is presided over by the DP World Tour and PGA of America. "I tried," said Lewis. "I tried really hard, actually. I probably spent more time on it than I should have. But whether it was timing or it was too late in the process, I don't know. To really market it correctly, this probably had to happen two years ago."

Lewis believes the US are underdogs against a European side who have won the last two stagings of the Solheim Cup. Suzann Pettersen, Europe's captain, is in no mood to play down the hosts' prospects. "If you look on paper, we have the strongest team that I have ever been a part of and that's based on great performances over the last few years from all the players," the Norwegian said. "These girls are so up for it, so we can't wait."

England's Georgia Hall agrees with her captain. "I think this is the strongest team we've ever had on paper, for sure," Hall said. "There's not one weak player on our team. I think you can put out any of us at any time and I think we'll perform well. So I think that makes it a little bit easier when picking players to go out and pairings for Suzann. We are very confident going into this."



▲ *British Gymnastics has been told its measures do not go far enough*

Gymnastics

Campaigners label banned list 'a betrayal'

Sean Ingle

British Gymnastics has been accused of "serious institution betrayal" and a "lack of transparency" by campaign groups, who say the organisation's newly created list of 62 banned coaches does not go far enough.

Former Olympians Brian Phelps and Stanley Wild are among those who have been given limited bans or expelled from British Gymnastics, owing to a criminal conviction or safeguarding, conduct and disciplinary reasons. However, Gymnasts for Change said many other coaches also met the criteria for a sanction, after the abuse scandal that came to light in 2020, and so should have been included on the list.

"The publication of British Gymnastics' expulsions list is an indictment against a failed organisation struggling to tackle the immense task of reforming its coaching cultures," it said in a statement. "It represents a serious institutional betrayal for many complainants and their families across the UK who have fought hard to report abuse in gymnastics."

The banned list follows last year's Whyte review, which painted a shocking and often sickening picture of the culture at all levels of the sport – and named more than 90 clubs and more than 100 coaches.

Anne Whyte found that girls as young as seven were sat on by coaches to "overstretch" their bodies, while others were strapped to bars for long periods of time as punishment. Meanwhile elite athletes were starved, body-shamed and abused in a system that ruthlessly put the pursuit of medals over the protection of children.

Gymnasts for Change also warned that the decision would have consequences, as it would lead the "coach-led culture of fear" described by the Whyte review to continue. The Gymnast Parent Alliance said it was "profoundly disappointed" by the list, with several coaches "conspicuously absent".

"We have consistently advocated for British Gymnastics to take a more transparent approach by publicly identifying coaches responsible for harming children through emotionally and physically abusive coaching techniques."

However, Geraldine Costello, British Gymnastics director of welfare and safe sport, said the list was in the best interest of the sport and the wider public. "Nothing is more important to us than the safety and wellbeing of all those involved in our sport," she said.

> *'Identify coaches responsible for harming children'*
> **Gymnast Parent Alliance**

Results

Rugby union

WORLD CUP
Pool A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	B	Pts
Italy	2	2	0	0	90	25	2	**10**
France	2	2	0	0	54	25	0	**8**
New Zealand	2	1	0	1	84	30	1	**5**
Uruguay	2	0	0	2	29	65	0	**0**
Namibia	2	0	0	2	11	123	0	**0**

Italy 38 Uruguay 17

Cricket

FIRST MEN'S ONE-DAY INTERNATIONAL

England v Ireland

Headingley *No result due to rain. Match abandoned.*

LV= INSURANCE COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP
Division One (second day of four)

Essex v Hampshire

Chelmsford Hampshire trail Essex by 437 runs with 10 first-innings wickets remaining.

Essex First innings (overnight 310-6)
MJJ Critchley c Gubbins b Dawson **99**
SR Harmer c Abbott b Organ **62**
UT Yadav c Abbott b Organ **51**
SJ Cook not out **7**
Extras (b8, lb2, w1, nb10) **21**
Total (for 9 dec, 119.4 overs) **447**

Fall cont 357, 427, 447. **Did not bat** JA Porter.
Bowling Barker 21-5-42-1; Mohammad Abbas 24-3-76-2; Abbott 24-6-62-1; Dawson 35-2-165-3; Organ 13.4-0-78-2; Gubbins 2-0-14-0.

Hampshire First innings
TE Albert not out **6**
FS Middleton not out **4**
Extras **0**
Total (for 0, 7 overs) **10**

To bat *NRT Gubbins, JM Vince, TJ Prest, †BC Brown, LA Dawson, FS Organ, KHD Barker, KJ Abbott, Mohammad Abbas.
Bowling Porter 3-0-10-0; SJ Cook 3-3-0-0; Harmer 1-1-0-0.
Toss Essex elected to bat.
Umpires NJ Llong and SJ O'Shaughnessy.

Lancashire v Nottinghamshire

Emirates Old Trafford *No play due to rain.*

Middlesex v Warwickshire

Lord's Warwickshire lead Middlesex by 107 runs with four first-innings wickets remaining.

Middlesex First innings 121 (OJ Hannon-Dalby 5-29).
Warwickshire First innings (overnight 72-4)
***WMH Rhodes** not out **95**
E Barnard lbw b TJ Murtagh **13**
†MGK Burgess b TJ Murtagh **7**
DR Briggs not out **71**
Extras (b1, lb7, nb10) **18**
Total (for 6, 64 overs) **228**

Fall cont 87, 95. **To bat** CN Miles, OJ Hannon-Dalby, C Rushworth. **Bowling** TJ Murtagh 17-5-55-5; Bamber 15-4-51-1; Higgins 6-0-14-0; Yadav 12-1-53-0; De Caires 4-0-11-0; Helm 9-4-29-0; Robson 1-0-7-0.
Toss Warwickshire elected to field.
Umpires RJ Warren and GD Lloyd.

Somerset v Kent

Taunton Somerset 214-2 (TA Lammonby 109; LP Goldsworthy 70 no). Somerset scored 214 runs for the loss of two first-innings wickets against Kent. *No play yesterday due to rain.*

Surrey v Northamptonshire

The Kia Oval Northamptonshire scored 351 runs for the loss of nine first-innings wickets against Surrey.



▲ *A deluge in Leeds meant England's first ODI v Ireland was abandoned*

Northamptonshire First innings (overnight 171-6)
KK Nair not out **144**
J Broad c Foakes b Lawes **17**
TAI Taylor lbw b Overton **66**
BW Sanderson b Overton **0**
CJ White not out **5**
Extras (lb3, w2, nb18) **23**
Total (for 9, 104.5 overs) **351**

Bowling Roach 19-6-61-0; Worrall 25-7-73-1; Overton 15.5-1-64-3; Clark 21-5-43-1; Burns 0.1-0-0-0; Lawes 22.5-5-100-4; Patel 1-0-7-0.
Toss Surrey elected to field.
Umpires RA White and PR Pollard.

Division Two (second day of four)

Derbyshire v Sussex

Derby *No play due to rain.*

Leicestershire v Yorkshire

Grace Road Yorkshire 155-9 (WS Davis 4-28). Yorkshire scored 155 runs for the loss of nine first-innings wickets agaist Lei cestershire. *No play yesterday due to rain.*

Worcestershire v Durham

Worcester Worcestershire 104-1 (GH Roderick 52). Worcestershire scored 104 runs for the loss of one first-innings wicket against Durham. *No play yesterday due to rain.*

Tennis

WTA GUADALAJARA OPEN AKRON (Mexico)
First round: J Ostapenko (Lat) bt M Kostyuk (Ukr) 6-2 6-3; **O Jabeur** (Tun) bt A Parks (US) 6-2 6-2; **M Sakkari** (Gre) bt S Hunter (Aus) 6-2 6-4; **E Navarro** (US) bt M Keys (US) 6-2 7-6 (7-5)

WTA GUANGZHOU OPEN (China)
Second round: R Masarova (Sp) bt V Golubic (Swi) 6-1 3-6 7-6 (9-7); **L Bronzetti** (It) bt M Uchijima (Jpn) 6-3 6-3; **M Linette** (Pol) bt D Saville (Aus) 6-0 7-6 (7-0); **G Minnen** (Bel) bt H Dart (GB) 7-6 (9-7) 6-7 (5-7) 6-4; **T Maria** (Ger) bt Bai Z (Chn) 6-1 6-2; **Y Putintseva** (Kaz) bt C Tauson (Den) 3-6 7-6 (7-5) 0-0 ret; **V Hruncakova** (Svk) bt Yuan Y (Chn) 7-6 (7-5) 5-7 6-4

ATP CHENGDU OPEN (China)
First round: T Daniel (Jpn) bt A Vukic (Aus) 4-6 6-4 6-2; **R Safiullin** (Rus) bt B Nakashima (US) 6-4 6-4; **C Moutet** (Fr) bt Mu T (Chn) 6-2 6-2

ATP ZHUHAI CHAMPIONSHIPS (China)
First round: L Harris (SA) bt J Vesely (Cz) 6-4 6-2; **Y Nishioka** (Jpn) bt T Atmane (Fr) 0-6 6-4 6-2; **D Svrcina** (Cz) bt Li Z (Chn) 6-4 6-3

Cycling

TOUR DE LUXEMBOURG
Stage 1 (Luxembourg - Luxembourg, 156.4km): **1** C Strong (Aus) Israel-Premier Tech 3hr 51min 1sec; **2** S Kragh Andersen (Den) Alpecin-Deceuninck; **3** A Aranburu (Sp) Movistar Team; **4** D Ulissi (It) UAE Team Emirates; **5** T Benoot (Bel) Jumbo-Visma all at the same time. **Selected others: 38** B Healy (Ire) EF Education-EasyPost at same time; **51** A Ryan (Ire) Jumbo-Visma +19sec; **78** O Knight (GB) Cofidis +4mins

Overall standings: 1 C Strong (Aus) Israel-Premier Tech 3hr 50min 51sec; **2** S Kragh Andersen (Den) Alpecin-Deceuninck +4sec; **3** A Aranburu (Sp) Movistar Team +6; **4** D Ulissi (It) UAE Team Emirates +10; **5** T Benoot (Bel) Jumbo-Visma at same time. **Selected others: 38** B Healy (Ire) EF Education-EasyPost +10sec; **51** A Ryan (Ire) Jumbo-Visma +29; **78** O Knight (GB) Cofidis +4mins 10sec

Fixtures

Rugby union
World Cup
Pool A France v Namibia (8pm)

Cricket
First Men's One-Day International
Bangladesh v New Zealand, Mirpur (9am)
Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy
The Blaze v South East Stars, Beckenham (10.30am)

Greg Wood's racing tips

Ayr **1.20** Capellina **1.50** Sisyphean **2.25** American Affair **3.00** What's The Story **3.35** Dungar Glory **4.10** Hale End **4.45** Cosa Sara **5.17** Highfield Viking
Pontefract **2.00** One More Dream **2.35** Bondy **3.10** Animato **3.45** Glorious Angel **4.20** Manxman **4.55** Hosanna Power **5.30** Global Spirit
Yarmouth **2.10** Storm Alice **2.45** Francesco Baracca **3.20** Labalaba **3.55** First Folio **4.30** Sailing On **5.05** Gone **5.40** Daring Guest **6.10** Primrose Maid
Chelmsford **5.24** Al Azhar **6.00** Alpen Power **6.30** Monaadhil **7.00** Animate (nap) **7.30** Bodygroove **8.00** Boom The Groom (nb) **8.30** El Royale



▼ *TSC's fans in Braga, where they saw their team lose their Champions League playoff 7-1 on aggregate*
EURASIA SPORT IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

Orban extends reach to make TSC a power in 'Serbia-Hungary'

West Ham's Europa League opponents are one of several clubs in their region feeling the benefit of political links

Nick Ames
European sports correspondent

On the face of it there was nothing unusual when, in October 2018, Viktor Orban attended the opening ceremony of a rural town's new football academy. Hungary's prime minister has long pumped vast amounts of money into his favourite sport, modernising its infrastructure while other elements of the government's activity regress deeper into authoritarianism, and he was present to see the fruits of another new project. Orban watched as a tournament between under-14 teams marked the opening of the €9.5m facility, staying long enough to hand the winners their trophy.

The twist: Orban was in a different country. He was visiting Backa Topola, a town in northern Serbia nearly 30 miles from the border with Hungary, to show his backing for its local side TSC. The surrounding region, Vojvodina, contains nearly 185,000 ethnic Hungarians and many are eligible to apply for citizenship, voting in the country's elections. At the last count they made up 58% of the club's surrounding municipality.

TSC had recently been promoted to Serbia's second tier at the time of Orban's ribbon-cutting. They have barely stopped rising since. It is one of the continent's most startling success stories: last season they broke up the near-permanent duopoly of the Belgrade giants Red Star and Partizan, finishing second in the SuperLiga, and after seven games they sit top of the 2023-24 table. Today they will face West Ham at the London Stadium, kicking off a Europa League group stage campaign that would have been unthinkable at most points in their 110-year history.

West Ham are clear favourites but unpicking TSC's identity may be less straightforward. "This is a Serbian club helped by Hungarians to reach this level," says the TSC president, Janos Zsemberi. "The Hungarian government assisted us, and we have their support because of the Hungarian community living here and nearby. But we are a Serbian club."

Zsemberi, a wealthy businessman, was pivotal to TSC's rebirth in 2013. They had, under various different prefixes, been a competent presence in Yugoslavia's second and third divisions, but fell into disrepair during the early 2000s while named AIK. The relationship with Hungary's political elite was partly brokered by the late Ferenc Arok, a former Australia national team coach who was born in the area and became Orban's football adviser. TSC are now sponsored by the Hungarian oil and gas multinational MOL; their academy was part-funded by Hungary's FA and a wider modernisation has come with a cash injection of about €30m.



Zarko Lazetic, TSC's head coach, has proved a shrewd appointment

It is a figure confirmed unabashedly by Zsemberi, who points to the smart but tiny TSC Arena that was completed two years ago with about half those funds. There is no doubt they have used the money cleverly: their manager, Zarko Lazetic, has built on the work of Zoltan Sabo, who died in 2020 after taking TSC to their first Europa League qualifiers, and the club's work is a picture of clarity in a Serbian football scene that tends towards the chaotic.

For now, TSC are a bridge between two countries that have forged stronger ties under Orban

"We love to learn from others," Zsemberi says. "When someone wants to learn how to become better, then it is easy. But the problem here in Serbia is that few people want to learn new things."

They have plenty of brains to pick. TSC work closely with Puskas Academy, a lavish project based across the border in Orban's childhood village, Felcsut, that has its own successful senior team, and the network extends more widely. Serbia is not the only country with large Hungarian pockets: there are greater numbers in Slovakia and Romania, where similar heavily funded football projects have sprung up in such communities.

Hard borders offer little resistance to soft power. The Transylvanian club Sepsi has been heavily financed by the Hungarian government and companies from the country; having risen through the system since its creation in 2011, they have won the past two Romanian Cups and narrowly failed to reach this season's Conference League group stage. DAC Dunajska Streda, a hitherto unremarkable club to the south-east of Bratislava in Slovakia, have become consistent title challengers after nearly a decade's involvement with Oszkar Vilagi, the deputy CEO of MOL and a close Orban associate.

The more established Croatian club Osijek returned to European competition after Lorinc Meszaros, an oligarch who heads up the Puskas Academy's operations, entered the picture in 2016. A slew of other, less prominent clubs and academies abroad also benefit from Hungarian assistance.

"We all receive money from the same sources, so we know each other from those meetings," Zsemberi says. "Our coaches and players share experiences and always can hear and see something different. I love that kind of cooperation, and I hope we will improve it more and more." It is not multi-club ownership but the common links are inescapable. Some of the benefits for Orban are clear: in creating gleaming, efficient football facilities and structures that have few rivals regionally, Hungarian nationalism and economic influence among its ethnic communities become dramatically more pronounced.



▲ *TSC and Serbia winger Milos Pantovic on the ball against Braga*

But the amount of money in effect being sent abroad by his own country's taxpayers, at a time when satisfaction with public services is low, has not necessarily escaped attention back home.

The arrivistes' success inevitably inflames local tensions. In Romania, a match between Sepsi and Universitatea Craiova last January was abandoned because of anti-Hungarian chants from the visiting fans. TSC have not been immune either. "A couple of times I heard rival fans at away games screaming at us: 'Hungarians, Hungarians,'" says Nenad Lukic, whose goals fired them into Europe before he moved to Honved and his current club, Changchun Yatai. "But no one was bothered about that. We didn't pay attention to those idiots."

The broader sense is that, certainly in comparison with their peers elsewhere, TSC are viewed favourably within Serbia. In a country where pitches and stadiums are poorly tended, clubs underfunded and players often not paid on time, they point the way to those seeking a route out of seemingly terminal decay. "People recognise a healthy sports project in which the club president invests lots of money and energy," Lukic says.

Orban and his partners have struck a chord, giving success-starved areas something they want. "I know there are some Serbs who say they don't want to support TSC because it's financed by the Hungarian government," says Djordje Lakic, a TSC fan since the lower-division days and a former footballer. "But I always ask them why no one from Serbia did that before. Why they, as local Serbs, didn't organise themselves and get some money to help the club. They had plenty of time."

Perhaps that is true, although they would not have shared Orban's political imperative. For now, TSC present a bridge between two countries that have forged stronger political ties under Orban and Serbia's president, Aleksandar Vucic, confirming a strategic partnership last year. This season's squad is overwhelmingly composed of ethnic Serbs, and Serbian is the language spoken during the working day.

Few expect TSC, who were soundly beaten by Braga in the Champions League playoffs, to make a dent on a group that also includes Olympiakos and Freiburg. But Lazetic's team play bold, slick attacking football and have the capacity to pose questions.

Zsemberi has a swift answer to another; one that has little precedent on this stage. When TSC line up opposite West Ham, will they be representing Serbia or Hungary? "Both countries," he replies. "We have invited both the Serbian and Hungarian ambassadors to be our guests in London, and they said they will come. Our country, now, is Serbia-Hungary."

Additional reporting by Jovan Terzic

Sport In brief

Olympics

Wiegman set to coach GB team at Paris Games

Sarina Wiegman is in line to manage Great Britain at next summer's Olympics in Paris should qualification be secured, the Football Association has announced. The women's football tournament there will feature three European sides: the hosts France and two teams who will secure qualification via the inaugural Women's Nations League that is just about to get under way. Meanwhile, Baroness Sue Campbell is to step down from her role as director of women's football at the Football Association next year. The 74-year-old joined the governing body in 2016 and is credited with transforming the women's game in England at the elite and grassroots levels. **PA Media**

Reading

EFL charges Royals owner with misconduct

Reading's owner, Dai Yongge, has been charged with misconduct by the EFL. The charge relates to a failure to comply with an order from an independent disciplinary commission to deposit an amount equal to 125% of the club's forecast monthly wage bill into a designated account by 12 September. League One Reading were docked three points over the failure to comply with the order, which had been imposed after the club did not pay player wages on time and in full on or around 31 October and 30 November last year, and on 28 April this year. **PA Media**

Tottenham

Perisic ruled out for the season with ACL injury

Tottenham confirmed last night that Ivan Perisic will miss the rest of the season after sustaining an ACL injury in his right knee. The experienced Croatia international, who has been used regularly off the bench since Ange Postecoglou took over at Spurs, will undergo surgery and begin rehabilitation immediately. Perisic is out of contract next summer and could be looking at a nine-month timeline before he can return to action. **David Hytner**



Ivan Perisic is set for a lengthy spell on the sidelines

Champions League *Group B*

Ødegaard strike caps rampant Arsenal's return to the top table

Arsenal	**4**
Saka 8, Trossard 20, Jesus 38, Ødegaard 70	
PSV Eindhoven	**0**

Nick Ames
Emirates Stadium

When the Champions League anthem aired inside Arsenal's home for the first time in six and a half years, its opening strains were drowned out by cheers. If that felt a touch saccharine, it summed up the crackling anticipation that had surrounded their return to the top table. Mikel Arteta's side promptly pulled up a chair and, long before the end, could recline in comfort. They overwhelmed a PSV Eindhoven side that, laudably but naively, came to trade blows and the hosts set themselves fair for a swift qualification from Group B.

It ended up being the kind of cakewalk more familiar to those who had sat through five Europa League campaigns since Arsenal's last appearance on this stage. They will certainly not always find things this easy but, in common with the rest of the resource-rich English representatives, should be expected to travel deep into the knockout stages. Any concerns that the occasion would overwhelm them were quickly dispelled by a characteristically sharp, insistent display that gave PSV little oxygen and ensured the manager could shuffle his pack long before the end.

"It was a beautiful night," a beaming Arteta said, explaining he had felt emotional in the buildup. "I was really excited about it. I wanted to be in control and not show that too much, but I was really excited. Now we have to produce what we have to produce to stay at this level."

They offered more than enough here. It felt apt that Bukayo Saka, a consistent seam of star quality during much of their time in the wilderness, got things moving. He could thank a loose piece of goalkeeping from Walter Benítez, whose parry of Martin Ødegaard's shot was barely worthy of the term, but Saka still had to be sharper than PSV's defenders in reacting and converting from a tight angle.

That was in the eighth minute and nobody with the faintest grasp of reality could have expected a different outcome from there. Helped by their opponents' willingness to commit men forwards, Arsenal coursed into the spaces left behind and could have scored again before Leandro Trossard doubled their lead. His second goal in as many games was a fine finish, swept first time from the edge of the area, after Gabriel Jesus had led a counter down the middle and allowed Saka to lay on the chance.

Jesus gave Benítez two opportunities to redeem himself, both taken, but made no mistake with his next opening. It came after Gabriel Magalhães' ball down the line to Trossard left the right-back Jordan Teze hopelessly exposed, meaning Trossard could scamper away and dig out a delivery to his colleague beyond the far post. Jesus's collected foot on the ball and a lashed drive across Benítez later, and the tie was stone dead.

"That's what we have to do," Arteta said. "In the box we were exceptional today, we were ruthless. It was top."

The second half was now a formality and, perhaps most importantly to Arteta, a chance to stand key players down early with Sunday's north London derby in mind. Proceedings were meandering until Emile Smith Rowe, a peripheral figure nowadays but far from forgotten in the stands, was given his first action of the season with 21 minutes left. He was greeted by perhaps the night's loudest, most fully-meant, roar: it recharged the pitch with energy and Smith Rowe quickly helped his fellow replacement Reiss Nelson tee up the magnificent Ødegaard for a cracked 20-yard finish that deservedly garnished the Norwegian's performance.

The feelings rose up in Arteta once again. "I was really emotional when I saw the reception of Emile as well," he said. "It's a player that hasn't played much yet and to get the reception that he got was much deserved."

Beyond a shot inside the first minute from Noa Lang, a swift and graceful mover who looked at home, David Raya was rarely extended in Arsenal's goal. He had again been selected in place of Aaron Ramsdale and Arteta, who gave a non-answer afterwards about the decision, had no cause to test his theory about goalkeeping substitutes. A VAR review into a potential penalty for handball by Oleksandr Zinchenko offered PSV a glimmer of hope between Arsenal's first two goals but it was swiftly cut short.

Raya has, as a minimum, not detracted from Arsenal's stability and distributed soundly all evening. Arteta was also pleased with Kai Havertz, who he said looked "really connected". Havertz could have had a second-half assist for Jesus and enjoyed the possibilities to maraud that PSV frequently offered; it was the kind of affair that helps a new signing find his legs and his radar.

In a relatively weak group, progress to the last 16 before the final match is up for grabs. Arteta's abiding delight was that, while hearts swelled as the music piped up, cool heads quickly took over. "We rode that energy and emotion in the right way," he said. "We have to enjoy these moments, these nights are the ones you remember in the end." Europe may yet end up dancing to Arsenal's tune.



▶ *Martin Ødegaard lashes home Arsenal's fourth goal*
TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

Arsenal
4-3-3
Raya; White, Saliba, Gabriel, Zinchenko (Tomiyasu 58); Rice (Jorginho 76), Havertz, Ødegaard; Saka (Vieira 69), Jesus (Smith Rowe 69), Trossard (Nelson 58)

PSV Eindhoven
4-2-3-1
Benítez; Teze, Bella-Kotchap (Ramalho 76), Boscagli, Dest; Schouten, Veerman; Bakayoko (Lozano 66), Saibari (Tillman 66), Lang (Vertessen 76); De Jong (Pepi 90)

Referee Felix Zwayer (Ger) **Attendance** 58,860

Football results

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

Bayern Munich (2) **4** Sané 28, Gnabry 32, Kane 53pen, Tel 90+2
Manchester United (0) **3** Højlund 49, Casemiro 88 90+5

Galatasaray (0) **2** Boey 86, Tetê 88
Copenhagen (1) **2** Elyounoussi 35, Gonçalves 58
46,911

Group B

Arsenal (3) **4** Saka 8, Trossard 20, Jesus 38, Ødegaard 70
PSV (0) **0**

Sevilla (1) **1** Ocampos 9
Lens (1) **1** Fulgini 24

Group C

Real Madrid (0) **1** Bellingham 90+4
Union Berlin (0) **0**
65,207

Sporting Braga (0) **1** Bruma 84
Napoli (1) **2** Di Lorenzo 45, Niakaté 88og

Group D

Benfica (0) **0**
Red Bull Salzburg (1) **2** Simic 15pen, Gloukh 51

Real Sociedad (1) **1** Méndez 4
Internazionale (0) **1** La Martínez 87

EUROPA CONFERENCE LEAGUE

Group A

Lille (1) **2** David 43pen, Yazici 90+4
Olimpija Ljubljana (0) **0**

SKY BET CHAMPIONSHIP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Preston	7	6	1	0	12	5	+7	**19**
Leicester	7	6	0	1	13	5	+8	**18**
Ipswich	7	6	0	1	13	7	+6	**18**
Sunderland	7	4	1	2	15	7	+8	**13**
Norwich	7	4	1	2	15	10	+5	**13**
Hull	7	3	3	1	10	7	+3	**12**
Bristol City	7	3	3	1	9	6	+3	**12**
Birmingham	7	3	2	2	8	7	+1	**11**
Leeds	7	2	4	1	10	7	+3	**10**
Cardiff	7	3	1	3	13	12	+1	**10**
Millwall	7	3	1	3	7	8	-1	**10**
Blackburn	7	3	1	3	9	12	-3	**10**
Southampton	7	3	1	3	11	17	-6	**10**
Watford	7	2	3	2	11	7	+4	**9**
West Brom	7	2	3	2	12	11	+1	**9**
Huddersfield	7	2	2	3	8	12	-4	**8**
Coventry	7	1	4	2	11	10	+1	**7**
Plymouth	7	2	1	4	10	11	-1	**7**
Stoke	7	2	1	4	7	9	-2	**7**
QPR	7	2	1	4	7	12	-5	**7**
Rotherham	7	1	1	5	7	16	-9	**4**
Swansea	7	0	3	4	7	12	-5	**3**
Sheffield Wed	7	0	2	5	5	11	-6	**2**
Middlesbrough	7	0	2	5	5	14	-9	**2**

Blackburn (1) **1** Leonard 35
Sunderland (2) **3** Clarke 28pen 78, Neil 45
15,621

Huddersfield (1) **2** Pearson 31, Rudoni 68
Stoke (1) **2** Johnson 33, Wilmot 62
18,791

Hull (0) **0**
Leeds (0) **0**
12,563

Millwall (1) **3** Longman 27, Flemming 58, Bradshaw 90
Rotherham (0) **0**

Watford (2) **2** Ince 3, Martins 23
West Brom (2) **2** Swift 14, Wallace 17
16,742

Norwich (0) **0**
26,277
Leicester (1) **2** Iheanacho 45pen, McAteer 87

Fixtures

(8pm unless stated)

Women's Nations League
Israel v Armenia (4pm)

Europa League
Group A Olympiakos v Freiburg; West Ham v Backa Topola. **Group B** Ajax v Marseille; Brighton v AEK. **Group C** Rangers v Real Betis; Sparta Prague v Aris. **Group D** Atalanta v Raków; Sturm Graz v Sporting. **Group E** LASK v Liverpool (5.45pm); Union S-G v Toulouse (5.45pm). **Group F** Panathinaikos v Villarreal (5.45pm); Rennes v Maccabi Haifa (5.45pm). **Group G** Servette v Slavia Prague (5.45pm); Sheriff v Roma (5.45pm). **Group H** Bayer Leverkusen v Häcken (5.45pm); Qarabag v Molde (5.45pm)

Europa Conference League
Group A Slovan Bratislava v KI Klaksvík. **Group B** Maccabi Tel-Aviv v Breidablik; Zorya Luhansk v Gent. **Group C** Dinamo Zagreb v Astana; Viktoria v Ballkani. **Group D** Club Bruges v Besiktas; Lugano v Bodø/Glimt. **Group E** Legia Warsaw v Aston Villa (5.45pm); Zrinjski v AZ (5.45pm). **Group F** Ferencvarosi v Cukaricki (5.45pm); Genk v Fiorentina (5.45pm). **Group G** E Frankfurt v Aberdeen (5.45pm); HJK v PAOK (5.45pm). **Group H** Fenerbahce v Nordsjælland (5.45pm); Ludogorets v Spartak Trnava (5.45pm)



First-half mistake costs United

André Onana fails to deal with Leroy Sané's shot as Bayern open the scoring at the Allianz Arena
MATTHIAS SCHRADER/AP

Onana blunder and Kane add to Ten Hag's troubles

Bayern Munich 4
Sané 28, Gnabry 32, Kane 53pen, Tel 90

Manchester United 3
Højlund 49, Casemiro 88 90

David Hytner
Allianz Arena

It had been difficult to locate any pre-match optimism around Manchester United. The club has sunk so low, so quickly in the early weeks of the season that it was almost as if their supporters would accept a defeat without humiliation on their Champions League return.

It was what they got. There were flickers from United in the opening quarter of the tie and the tonic of a first goal from the summer signing, Rasmus Højlund, to make it 2-1 at the beginning of the second half. At least United fought until the end, something that the beleaguered Erik ten Hag will cling to in the days ahead.

Casemiro offered the hope that United could snatch a draw, scoring on 88 minutes for 3-2 and jolting Bayern Munich, who had been toying with their opponents. Casemiro would score again with virtually the last action - after the Bayern substitute Mathys Tel had made it 4-2. The goals were big for Casemiro, who has laboured so far this season, the second a flicked header from Bruno Fernandes's free-kick.

Bayern know a thing or two about United's ability to come back from the brink but there was barely time for a final kick-off. Moreover, this is a different era, a different United team and the greater takeaways from their performance were individual errors and an overall softness.

United only seem to play in fits and starts at the moment. Their self-belief is at a low ebb - it was as if they, too, expected a fourth loss in five games - and their numerous injured players cannot return quickly enough.

The image of the evening was that of the goalkeeper, André Onana, with his face buried in the turf, burning with embarrassment after spilling a tame Leroy Sané shot into his own goal for 1-0.

The inevitable Harry Kane goal celebration was not far behind. Kane got the assist for Sané and, when Christian Eriksen was penalised for handball shortly after Højlund's goal, the England captain buried the penalty. Kane has five goals in five starts for his new club.

Serge Gnabry had scored Bayern's second and they had the chances to add to their lead before Casemiro slipped and still managed to steer home for his first. It was a bizarre ending because at 3-2, Thomas Müller - on as a substitute - hit the post on a Bayern counter before Tel further burnished his fast-rising reputation with a cool finish.

The perennial German champions were unbeaten in their previous 27 home Champions League group ties and they had won their opening fixture in each of the past 19 campaigns by an aggregate score of 47-2.

Ten Hag had been bold with his approach at the outset, Fernandes and Eriksen pushed up in central midfield, Facundo Pellistri given his chance on the right wing. The 21-year-old almost enjoyed the dream start only to feel Alphonso Davies make a saving tackle on him. When the ball broke, Eriksen drilled low for goal. Sven Ulreich saved smartly.

Ten Hag's first lament was that his team did not get anything from their early promise, which was marked by some slick passing. Instead, Bayern stirred, with Lisandro Martínez required to race back to win a one-on-one tackle with Gnabry.

The breakthrough goal was a body blow and if Onana's howler will take the headlines, the defending on the United left was so tame. Sané was shown inside by Sergio Reguilón and Marcus Rashford but Eriksen did not make the tackle. Sané was allowed to swap passes with Kane and unload his shot and that was when Onana wanted the ground to swallow him up.

Bayern were merciless in how they turned the screw, Jamal Musiala running up the inside left and turning into Diogo Dalot, who lost the duel. Again, it was weak. When the ball broke and with Victor Lindelöf sucked across, Musiala pulled back for Gnabry whose finish was true.

Reguilón combined with Casemiro to cross low on 34 minutes; there was nobody there for United. But it was Reguilón's work at the other end that was the worry. He backed off before the interval and allowed Sané to curl for the far corner. It was only just wide.

It was hard to ignore Ten Hag's selection crisis. Missing 12 players for various reasons, he named three goalkeepers on the substitutes' bench and only one defender - Jonny Evans.

United were determined to salvage something in the second half, even if it was pride, and their hopes surged when Højlund took a pass from Rashford and shot quickly, the effort flicking in off Kim Min-jae.

The goal only seemed to make United more vulnerable, Musiala streaking clear straight away to win a corner. From it, Bayern won the penalty and it was harsh, Dayot Upamecano thudding a header at Eriksen's arm from point-blank range.

Kane did the rest and it was easy to fear the rout thereafter as Bayern created half a dozen good chances, Sané hitting the post with the best one, Onana making some decent saves. The finale was strange and illusory.

Ronaldo return 'wrong'

Ole Gunnar Solskjær has admitted that signing Cristiano Ronaldo when he was the Manchester United manager "felt right but was wrong" and that he was let down by the egos of unnamed players, whose failure to pull together presaged his sacking in November 2021,following a 4-1 loss at Watford.

In the summer Ronaldo had joined the club for a second time at age 35. While he scored twice against Newcastle in his opening game, a 4-1 victory, his addition unbalanced Solskjær's team.

"It was a decision that was very difficult to turn down and I felt we had to take it, but it turned out wrong," Solskjær told the Athletic. "It felt so right when he signed and the fans felt that at that Newcastle game, when Old Trafford was rocking. He was still one of the best goalscorers in the world."

Solskjær stated some of his squad had inflated views of themselves. "They weren't as good as their own perception of themselves," he said. "I won't name names." Jamie Jackson

Bayern Munich
4-2-3-1
Ulreich; Laimer, Upamecano, Kim, Davies; Goretzka●, Kimmich; Sané (Tel 87), Musiala (Choupo-Moting 75), Gnabry (Coman 63); Kane (Müller 87)

Manchester United
4-3-3
Onana; Dalot, Lindelöf, Martínez●, Reguilón; Fernandes, Casemiro, Eriksen (McTominay 69); Pellistri (Garnacho 81), Højlund (Martial 81), Rashford

Referee Glenn Nyberg (Swe) **Attendance** 75,000

Analysis
Barney Ronay



Hard-running Højlund shows he can thrive as United's Mr Right Now



▲ *Harry Kane scores Bayern's third goal from the penalty spot*
NICK POTTS/PA

It is a measure of where Manchester United are in this toxic early season, an early season where things just keep on happening, and where those things are divided into three distinct types, bad things, very bad things and really terrible things, that by the end a 4-3 defeat in Munich really didn't seem like much of a disappointment.

At times it almost felt like the green shoots of something. Or at least it did when Rasmus Højlund was scoring his first goal for the club; or in the early moments when United pressed well; and then towards the end when they refused to die and kept on coming in relentless zombie waves.

It was of course a Harry Kane story too, up to a point. All of the talk around this game had been about Kane and United, a non-move that has since taken on its own independent life, part of the endlessly recycling narrative of disappointment around Old Trafford.

Should Manchester United have bought Kane? It seems odd the question is even asked, just as the explanations as to why this didn't happen – he's 30 years old; and Daniel Levy is annoying – are even odder. Does that really sound like ruthless executive action?

The reality is United should have signed Kane two or three years ago, simply by pulling hard enough on the string. Big clubs are supposed to actively recruit big players. United should expect to have a functioning high-class centre-forward.

Whereas by contrast the list of centre-forwards signed since Alex Ferguson left tells its own short story: Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Radamel Falcao, Edinson Cavani, Old Ronaldo; Odion Ighalo and Wout Weghorst on loan. Romelu Lukaku lasted two years. And now they have Højlund, on whose shoulders a lot rests, who has so much tender promise.

Kane scored, of course. He looks good in the Bayern shirt, looks authentically elite in those colours. His 16th touch, 10 minutes into the second half was a penalty to make the score 3-1. Kane took two steps back and spanked it with thrilling power into the corner. No disguise, no feints, just pure straight lines.

This is a more minimal Kane. Thomas Tuchel went with Serge Gnabry and Leroy Sané as the attacking entourage, with Jamal Musiala just behind, the combined effect a whirl of speed, agility, twinkling feet (and Harry Kane).

Musiala is one of Europe's finest driving creative players, with a lovely eye for a pass. Bayern don't need a No 10 clogging those spaces. They need a razor edge. And it is quite refreshing to see Kane no longer driven to make up the game on his own, to carry his team around the place on his shield like 10 dying comrades.

Indeed by the end it was hard to make any real case that signing Kane now, in this United team, would have been an end in itself, a fix for the holes in the midfield, or the innate cultural dopiness at the back.

Maybe in Højlund, they might have the promising, hard-pressing 20-year-old centre-forward they need at this stage, Mr Right Now

> *Højlund also has what Ten Hag has wanted, the ability to press an opposition in spaces close to goal*



Rasmus Højlund reacts after scoring his first goal for Manchester United

in a team that has lacked that energy. He played quite well. He touched the ball eight times in the first half. There was a header he might have got on target from an excellent Diogo Dalot cross. But Højlund does also have what Erik ten Hag has wanted, the ability to press an opposition in the spaces close to goal.

And four minutes into the second half he scored, a messy, scrappy finish from exactly the right spot as the ball was slipped sideways by Marcus Rashford. These are the good moments for a No 9, things that look easy but aren't.

So United's season will rumble on. The familiar brittleness will remain. The squad is both injury ravaged and uneven. At 3-1 down they had Jonny Evans and Scott McTominay warming up.

Plus there was a moment of horror from André Onana for Bayern's opening goal. This was a miserable mistake at the wrong moment on the wrong stage. Kane helped to make it, laying the ball back to Sané. He was a little too far out. He shot, but straight at Onana, who basically leapt over the ball.

Onana has had some strange moments in his short United career so far. Does he feel like an impermeable barrier? At times there is a feeling of someone jumping around impressibly quite near a football match.

But then there is an anti-energy to this club now. Sign for Manchester United as a sprightly up-and-comer with your own sense of destiny. Almost immediately you become something else: you become a Manchester United player, part of this listing ship, a place where all the trolleys have missing wheels, where everyone seems always to be losing something vital.

This was one lesson from Munich. Kane, alone, was never going to fix this team. But in Højlund United at least have some forward energy.

Spain boycott all but ended after 'profound changes' promised

Federation secretary general sacked and others set to go as part of deal to end stalemate

Ashifa Kassam
Madrid

The majority of Spain's top female footballers have ended their boycott of the national team after the government intervened to secure a promise of "immediate and profound changes" to the football federation (RFEF).

Hours later, the federation announced that it had sacked its secretary general, Andreu Camps, while a federation official told Reuters that between six and nine senior officials – some of them suggested by the players themselves – were set to be fired. Earlier in the day the federation rolled out its first measure: an announcement that both its men's and women's national teams would be known as the Spanish national football team. Previously the men's team had been referred to as the Spanish national football team, while the women were the Spanish women's national football team.

The federation's interim president, Pedro Rocha, described it as a step that sought to go beyond symbolism and recognise that "football is football, no matter who plays it", the RFEF said in a statement.

He said: "We believe that making it clear that the two national teams are equal also allows us to move towards a more egalitarian conception of football."

The decision by all but two players to end their boycott came after a seven-hour meeting between players, the federation and Spain's high council for sport. It was the latest twist in the upheaval that has engulfed Spanish football since Luis Rubiales grabbed the player Jenni Hermoso by the head, pulled her towards him and kissed her on the lips after La Roja won the World Cup in Australia last month.

After Rubiales stepped down as the RFEF's president this month, the players remained resolute that they would continue to boycott the national team until further changes were made to the federation leadership. On Monday their decision was seemingly ignored after the new coach, Monte Tomé, named 15 of the World Cup-winning players in her squad.

The majority of players initially responded with plans to continue their boycott. But the threat of fines of up to €30,000 (£26,000) and the possibility of being banned from appearing for their clubs seemingly left many with little choice; footage shot on Tuesday appeared to show a number of the players stony-faced as they boarded a bus for the training camp. When the goalkeeper Misa Rodríguez was asked by a reporter whether she was happy to have been called up by Tomé, she replied: "No."

Yesterday in the early hours the Spanish government said the two players who refused the call-up, Mapi León and Patri Guijarro, would not face sanctions.

"The first thing we told them was that whoever is not comfortable, for whatever reason, should know that neither the federation nor the high council for sports will apply a sanctioning process," Spain's secretary for sports and president of the high council for sports, Víctor Francos, told reporters.

"The players are going through a complicated moment and it is good to be able to say that the women's national team will play both matches with guarantees and victories," he said, in reference to upcoming Nations League games against Sweden and Switzerland. The matches will help determine which European teams qualify for the 2024 Olympics.

The demands made by players during the meeting reportedly included that Rocha step down.

The federation released a second statement yesterday, saying it had not intended to "create more noise and add to the pressure on players" and "deeply regretted" that this was how the call-up was being viewed.

Noting its support for players as they "go through these unwanted circumstances", it reiterated its apology to all the players for what had happened in the wake of the World Cup win, in particular to Hermoso, who was "immersed in a situation that she did not create". It said: "We will always support them."

León and Guijarro, both of whom were exiled from Spain's World Cup-winning squad after a 2022 protest against the federation, spoke to reporters about their decision to leave the squad.

"The situation for me and for Patri is different to the rest of our teammates," said León. "We already knew this was not the right way to return, and we are not in the right state."

She said they fully supported their teammates. "We are happy because changes are being made."



▲ *Patri Guijarro (left) and Mapi León remain on strike for Spain*

Happy returns
Arsenal enjoy Champions League stroll on comeback

Page 37 →



Seagulls tour
Brighton ready for their first European adventure

Page 33 →



The Guardian
Thursday 21 September 2023

9 770261 307248 38

Sport



David Hytner's match report
Page 38 →

Bayern Munich	Manchester United
4	3
Sané 28, Gnabry 32, Kane 53pen, Tel 90	Højlund 49, Casemiro 88 90

'I let the team down'
Onana accepts blame as United pain piles up

▲ *Sergio Reguilón tries to restore André Onana's confidence after the goalkeeper's error gave Bayern the lead*
DANIEL KOPATSCH/ UEFA VIA GETTY

David Hytner
Allianz Arena

Erik ten Hag questioned the fight of his Manchester United players as their traumatic start to the season continued with a 4-3 Champions League defeat at Bayern Munich - their fourth loss in five matches.

André Onana accepted the blame for the result, saying he had "let the team down" with his handling error for Leroy Sané's opening goal, which came after United had been the better side for the first 20 minutes or so.

But Ten Hag looked more at the way Sané was allowed to drift inside without challenge, swap passes with Harry Kane and shoot. The United manager was similarly upset at how easily Jamal Musiala was able to set up Serge Gnabry for 2-0.

"The first goal was so easy and it was not only André," Ten Hag said. "You see how easy Sané was going through and that has to do with determination. You don't let players through so easy.

"We have to make our own luck and that has to do with determination. No one will bring you anything in football. The second goal … it's almost similar over on the other side, how easy players come through our box and to finish. It can't be.

"You have to suffer, sacrifice in situations to stop that and only when we get that in, we'll win games. When you score three goals in Munich, you have to take a point. You have to look in the mirror because the goals were easy giveaways."

Ten Hag is in the midst of a selection crisis, with 12 players missing here - nine because of injury. He was asked whether United's problems were down to the injuries or mentality. "Both," he replied. "We only get out of this with both."

Onana was distraught about his mistake and he requested to speak to the media. "We started well and after my mistake we lost control," he said. "I let the team down. It's because of me we didn't win.

"They hadn't created any chances and their first shot on target … I made the mistake and the team went down. We fought until the end but I have to recognise that we didn't win because of me. I still have a lot to prove. My start [at United] hasn't been so good, not how I wanted."

Smith set for full-back shift with Farrell to be restored

Gerard Meagher
Nice

Marcus Smith is expected to make a first start at full-back for England against Chile on Saturday while Owen Farrell is poised to return as captain.

England fans who booed England's kick-heavy approach against Japan would be delighted to see Smith lining up at No 15 but sources close to the 24-year-old have questioned why he is not being given a chance at fly-half. Instead, Steve Borthwick is expected to turn to Farrell, available again after suspension, with George Ford dropping to the bench.

Smith impressed in an 11-minute cameo at full-back against Japan last weekend - just as he did in the warm-up fixtures against Ireland and Fiji - but has never started a professional match there. He last started for England No 10 against Wales in their opening World Cup warm-up match but has fallen down the fly-half pecking order behind Farrell and Ford.

The positional move was suggested to Smith by Kevin Sinfield, the defence coach, over the summer but Richard Wigglesworth, the attack coach, was full of praise for how he has handled the transition. "I think [Marcus has] been really smart with how he has done it," he said.

"One, he wants the ball. He is desperate to get his hands on the ball first and foremost. But he's been really smart with where he positions himself, how he gets it, and hasn't tried to play like a No 10 out wide. He's gone: 'Get me the ball, and then I'll play on.' Then he'll use the capability he's got with his feet and his acceleration."

Farrell, meanwhile, is available again after his four-match suspension came to an end. Ford has been one of England's standout performers to date but, barring a late change of heart before Borthwick names his team today, will drop to the bench to accommodate the return of Farrell.

Rugby World Cup *Pages 34-35 →*



▲ *Marcus Smith looks set to start in an unfamiliar role against Chile*

G2

The Guardian



Gone in 47 seconds …

Life in bike theft Britain

Thursday 21/09/23

Life & Arts

‘Sue fell in a hole!’
The inside story of GBBO
page 4



★★★★★
Chris Packham: Is It Time to Break the Law?
page 10

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The Guardian

Adrian Chiles



Can I interest you in a few dozen worm-eaten apples?

Sometimes you smell them before you see them. These people carry a particular scent. It is worthy and rich but with a suggestion of the fetid – like creamy milk that is on the verge of turning sour. I don't want to be rude about them because they are nice folk and I am one of them. I own a fruit tree. And I can't get rid of the fruit.

Every autumn the world divides into those with fruit trees and those without. The latter have to be on high alert for the people bearing fruit. A friend, a colleague, even a passing stranger can stage an ambush. Before you know it, they will have whipped out a bag of their produce and thrust it under your nose so that particular smell assaults your senses. "Help yourself," they say. "Ooh, lovely!" you are forced to exclaim. It's the simple gift there is no polite way to refuse.

You will look into the bag and see dozens of imperfect apples, scarred and blotched. Some will be holed, the work of worms that have burrowed in, perhaps never to emerge. But you mustn't be squeamish and turn up your nose. Have you not railed against the suspicious gloss and symmetry of supermarket fruit? Now here is the real thing and you must dig in, and dig deep, and be the opposite of picky. You must actively enthuse. Mmm, authentic!



There is a lot going on here. The pressure is intense, on both sides. We bearers of fruit are weighed down by our bounty, oppressed by the need to pass it on before we have to bin it. Yes, we can juice it and puree it, but there are only so many hours in the day. And there is only so much of it we can eat; only so much Imodium we can safely take.

This autumn has not been quite so bad. I have fewer and better apples. I followed some advice that when the fruit first starts to develop in little clusters on the branches, you should leave just one apple from each cluster to grow to a decent size, instead of half a dozen tiddlers.

Something had to change. Last September, my single tree yielded 200 undersized apples. I could not shift them. My neighbours started shunning me, pretending to be out when I knocked on the door. Others crossed the road if they saw me coming. Nobody came visiting. I resorted to taking them to work. This was in the weeks after the death of the Queen. I was broadcasting live from Canada Gate, across the way from Buckingham Palace. I did good business on the first day, shifting a couple of dozen to producers, technicians, royal correspondents and other contributors. But on day two I detected a loss of enthusiasm. Perhaps someone had found a worm and sent out a warning.

My rucksack remained heavy with apples as I wandered around the temporary memorial flowerbeds of Green Park, speaking to mourners. Then I had a brainwave. At the conclusion of an interview with a Canadian woman, I asked her if she would like an apple. She looked nonplussed – Canadian journalists obviously don't give items of fruit to interviewees – but nevertheless accepted and munched away happily enough. The next couple of interviewees took some too. A man down from Fife took a handful. Soon I dispensed with the interviews and just started handing out apples. People were heartbreakingly grateful. Absurdly, my gesture even took on a faintly spiritual dimension, which made me feel a bit of a fraud.

I walked back to the broadcast point with an empty rucksack. My colleagues relaxed, visibly. The pressure was off. It was over for another year.

As toxic as it is, Twitter can help flush bad things away

Like most people, I was appalled to hear Russell Brand's BBC Radio 2 interview with Jimmy Savile from 2007. And like most people, even without the benefit of hindsight, I can't quite believe anyone found it anything but appalling at the time. I kind of had to listen to it from behind the sofa. It was to do with Brand sending his "very attractive" female assistant round to Savile's place to perform services, naked. Or something like that. I'm sure you can find it for yourselves if you really want the full picture.

Yes, those were different times, but not that different. So where was the outrage? Where did it go? We often yearn for the days before social media took over our lives, but social media might have made a difference here. Twitterstorms, pile-ons and trolling were terms unfamiliar to us then, and phenomena which the liberal-minded are now generally against. But a bit of a Twitterstorm might have done the trick. Brand, Savile and whoever was in charge might well have found themselves at the bottom of a right old pile-on and had to hang their heads in shame.

Before social media, especially if one of a handful of newspapers didn't choose to take up arms, there was no forum on which a storm of righteous indignation could whip itself up. Twitter, or X, or whatever we have to call it now, is a vector for the mad, bad and plain wrong. A good deal of this bad stuff concerns just what we happen to disagree with, of course. But a fair amount is only for the sewer. It's a sewer in which many a scumbag can hide in plain sight and, even worse, recruit support from the feeble-minded.

We rightly rail against all this, and the damage to young minds, political discourse, and all the rest of it. But we rather forget that it can also be a forum on which the right stuff can flourish, flushing a good deal of bad stuff away down that sewer.



When Brand spoke to Savile, where was the outrage?

Pass notes



Nº 4,613

Rent-a-parent

Age: Still in its infancy, unlike its beneficiaries, rent-a-parent is apparently a product of the pandemic.

Appearance: Motherly.

What fresh hell is this? It is the latest gift from the decadent death throes of late capitalism in the US: parents are paying people – well, women – to provide parenting services to their college-age kids.

Parenting services for uni students? Surely that means sending cash bailouts, links to articles about the dangers of ketamine and pictures of the cat doing something "funny"? Yes, once the ritual of driving your anxious fresher hundreds of miles in a car stuffed with duvets and boxes, paying for one lavish big shop, then being summarily dismissed is over, that's the traditional way of parenting a student.

If you are really unlucky, you may have to respond to a 3am WhatsApp a few months later that reads "got arrested lol", but that's it. Well, according to the Wall Street Journal, these "college moms" do far more. Services include setting up students' dorm rooms in their preferred colour scheme; making beds; taking in parcels; organising and accompanying students to medical appointments; and even advising on which courses and teachers to choose.

Advice, you say? We all know how much young adults love getting that from parents. Maybe it goes down better when you are not related? One college mom said she "has been around long enough to know, for instance, which instructors give an easy A".

I object to the use of the word "mom" for this helicopter parenting by proxy. Yes, it's maddening, if not entirely new. The concept of "sorority house moms" – employed to look after domestic matters and deal with emotional drama in those weird residential sisterhoods – is a well-established part of US college culture. The maternal load may never end, but it can be outsourced for $10,000 for an academic year, as quoted by one company.

Isn't the point of university that it is a time of heady, chaotic independence – shrinking all your clothes, eating nothing but kebabs, never cleaning anything? That's the real education. Yes, scurvy and salmonella definitely made us the people we are today.

How will any of these kids become functional adults if they are treated like babies? I expect the crushing disappointment of real life once these services are withdrawn at graduation will do the trick.

Do say: "I've changed your sheets, ironed your jammies, cleaned the loo, popped the washing on and made you a lasagne, darling."

Don't say: "That will be £450 plus VAT and any gratuity you feel is appropriate."

COVER: GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO





The latest lineup … Paul Hollywood, Alison Hammond, Prue Leith and Noel Fielding

'Nobody knew what they were doing!'

How did an amateur cake competition become a global phenomenon? Contestants, judges and creators of The Great British Bake Off take **Ralph Jones** behind the scenes

Soggy bottoms! Paul Hollywood's eyes! The controversial move to Channel 4! For years, The Great British Bake Off was pitched to multiple channels, but no one wanted it. Not long after it was finally picked up, however, it became one of the most successful British TV shows ever.

Now, as its 14th series nears, its creators and stars reveal how an innocuous show about making cakes and biscuits became a global phenomenon.

Richard McKerrow, co-creator of Bake Off and co-founder, Love Productions: We were conscious that baking competitions are held all around the country at fetes, but no one had done an amateur baking show before. We found out why pretty quickly. Even though we loved the idea, people just said: "Come on – baking? It'll be like watching paint dry."

Anna Beattie, co-creator of Bake Off and co-founder, Love Productions: In those early days, it was much more of an "X Factor for baking" idea. We had visions of people queueing around the block with their cakes.

McKerrow: I had a very good relationship with Danny [Cohen] at BBC Three. He said: "It's a bloody good idea. Why don't you send it to me and I'll walk it over to Janice [Hadlow] at BBC Two?"

Beattie: Then we spent hours in the office role-playing how it would work until we had the choreography nailed – gingham altar and all.

Janice Hadlow, former controller, BBC Two: It was the perfect subject. There is something quite magical about the idea of home baking.



Richard McKerrow and Janice Hadlow

Beattie: But it was deemed technically impossible. The show we were proposing was a big setup: a dozen people baking in real ovens. No one had ever tried to do something like that. Eventually, our amazing technical and outside-broadcast teams worked out a way that we could do it all in a tent, with enough power and water and without the sound team having a heart attack every time it rained.

Miranda Gore Browne, runner-up, series one: I'd always said there should be a MasterChef for baking. If only I'd come up with the idea, I'd be sitting in a multimillion-pound house.

Edd Kimber, winner, series one: I had no desire to go on TV or be well known. I applied because I didn't think I would get on.



Debut winner Edd Kimber; original hosts Sue Perkins and Mel Giedroyc



Beattie: I remember being at home when I first saw Mary [Berry]'s tape; it just felt like we couldn't make the show without her. She was so natural - of course she was, she had been baking and broadcasting for ever - but it was the forensic forthrightness with which she spoke about baking.
Paul Hollywood, judge: They opened up a bag of muffins and bread and tipped them on to my kitchen counter and said: "Judge them." So I did. And I was quite brutal about it, if I remember, because they were terrible. They said: "Brilliant!" And then they put them back in the bag and left. I thought: "Well, that was odd."
Beattie: Mel [Giedroyc] and Sue [Perkins] were suggested by Janice, I think. It was a really big risk for them. This was an unknown show and it was a more straightforward presenter role than either of them had done before.
Sam Montague, cinematographer: I think most of us thought: "This is never going to catch on."
Kieran Smith, creative director, Love Productions: We were pleased to have what could be a returning series, but we were all a bit embarrassed about doing a baking show.
Andy Devonshire, director: The first series was really hard work. It was like being part of a - I don't want to say war, because that sounds wrong. It was like a massive travelling commune, where you were all in it together. It was like touring U2.
Kimber: I don't think I'm being critical by saying nobody knew what they were doing. Production didn't know that baking takes time. In the first week, we did the washing-up.
Tom Howe, composer: Now, shows are all set up to be "everyone is nice to each other", but around that time that just wasn't the case. All the stuff on TV - Dragons' Den, Hell's Kitchen - had people shouting at each other. You get to episode 10 [of Bake Off] and all the people that have been eliminated come back for a tea party.
Hadlow: Contestants might be disappointed, but they were never humiliated.
McKerrow: What they [the commissioners] hadn't realised was that it could be profoundly dramatic. When you're a baker, it's not a competition between you and someone else; it's a competition between you and the oven.
Kimber: After they finish filming, the crew just demolish all the bakes; you know who is going to do well because the crew come up to you and say: "Oh my God, everyone ate your thing." The week after, I was told that my bread had been taken home by Paul and served to a dinner party. I was told that he claimed he'd made it.
Hollywood: Sorry, I don't remember that one. That sounds like a myth and a legend.

The first series didn't get glowing reviews, but millions of people tuned in - enough for the show to be recommissioned by BBC Two.

McKerrow: The crucial creative changes came between series one and series two: the introduction of the star baker; the technical being blind.
Beattie: We sharpened up the format, making the differences between the challenges clearer. We gave the showstopper a name.
Urvashi Roe, contestant, series two: They [the producers] did stir up trouble. We were microphoned up from 6am until the end of the day, including when we went to the toilet. As soon as you made a mistake, they were there.
Hollywood: I never really thought that the handshake was a thing. It was just a way of saying "well done" and I'm not quite sure why it took off the way that it did. I think someone said in the press: "Oh, it was quite misogynistic, giving someone a handshake," and I'm going: "Misogynistic? Whaaat?"
Smith: We took the shackles off around series three. I remember doing pieces to camera and Sue fell down a hole and we kept it in. I started looking at it more as an entertainment show rather than a baking show. That's when it went from being a popular show to being a *really* popular show.
Beattie: It was a bit crazy - we were getting more viewers than the football.

In 2017, the show moved to Channel 4 - but not before a huge media furore, with Hollywood staying, but Giedroyc and Perkins leaving, along with Berry.

McKerrow: The beginning of the fallout with the BBC happened three years before we moved to Channel 4, when the BBC made a copycat series which we were legally advised was a blatant case of format infringement. The BBC went into denial. Eventually, they conceded and a settlement was reached. Then, a year later, the same thing happened again. We never wanted to leave the BBC and we never intended to leave the BBC. But we felt we had no alternative. At the time, the BBC sought to portray the move purely as financial, which was a false narrative.
Jay Hunt, former chief creative officer, Channel 4: All anybody knew was that it was the biggest show on British television at the time.

> “I never thought the handshake was a thing. It was just a way of saying ‘well done’



Fielding and the judges watch Peter Abatan at work in series eight

Hollywood: When Mel and Sue came out with: "We're not going with the dough," that hurt me a little bit, because that felt like a direct dig at me.
McKerrow: There were plays to get some big-name talent - Miranda Hart and Michael McIntyre. In the end, we went to see Sandi Toksvig and she was one of the few people up for doing it.
Hunt: Noel Fielding was my idea and it was a very risky decision.
Hollywood: The last time I saw Noel, he was acting like a fly.
Noel Fielding, presenter: I said to my girlfriend: "Oh my God - I feel like I could do this job." I went into the audition; I think I had a homemade David Bowie chair and some vegetable signed by David Suchet.
Smith: Probably the most important thing for presenters is: how good are they when they just wander in and chat to bakers? I thought gardeners are quite similar to bakers, so we took Noel to a garden centre [for his audition]. We would spend about two hours there and get him talking to eight, nine people.
Fielding: I was playing Alice Cooper [for Sky's comedy series Urban Myths], so I had a wig on and a false nose. I was just very lucky; I think there were a couple of old ladies who were really funny and one of them asked to marry me.
Smith: Then we did it with Matt Lucas. He went up to this woman and she goes: "Oh God, your career's gone down the pan, hasn't it?"
Prue Leith, judge: I watched Paul and Mary judging a Christmas episode and thought: "I could do that." I wasn't so excited about it - until I got in the tent. It was February; it was absolutely freezing cold. I was in a kind of velvet jumpsuit and moon boots. It's the best job in the world: you just walk on, eat cake, say what you think, walk off, get paid.
Hunt: The scale of the risk - for me reputationally, for Channel 4 - was epic.
Steven Carter-Bailey, runner-up, series eight: We were up at 4am, ferried over in blacked-out limos,



Sandro Farmhouse got to the final of series 13

bodyguards everywhere. There were drones flying overhead; helicopters; checking into hotels under a different name. I'll never forget I used my mother's maiden name for 12 weeks.

Now a colossus of a show with more than a dozen international iterations (including Brazil, Kenya, Uruguay, Greece and Australia), Bake Off attracts the occasional controversy - as well as increasingly savvy contestants who know the show could make them world-famous.

Smith: We did "Japanese week" and members of the Japanese community were like: "That's not a traditional bao bun." We've identified that there is a tension between the signature challenge and national bakes.
Kimber: As the show has got older, it's become more about personality rather than talent, necessarily.
Sandro Farmhouse, runner-up, series 13: I always knew that Bake Off was destiny for me. When I applied the second time, I got as far as the in-person interview. I had 17,000 followers. I was like: I'm freaking great, I know how to bake and I'd be good on TV. Why not have me? I seemed to have been too popular on Instagram for the show. They didn't tell me that, but I had it in my mind that that's what it was, so I deleted all my followers. Every day, I removed 100 people.
Beattie: I think the show has, in its small way, got more people baking over the last 13 years. I love that families can watch the show together - that an eight-year-old can watch with an 80-year-old.
Hollywood: I've always said it's like a framed picture. The picture itself is the bakers, and the bakers change, so the picture changes. The framework stays the way it is. And we are, as the hosts and the judges, the framework of Bake Off. The bakers become the stars of the show, however transient that is.
Fielding: It's almost like public property. You have to treat it with respect. It is a real collision of elements that somehow come together. Baking is done with love. It's about sharing, ultimately, and it's about someone making your day better.
The Great British Bake Off returns to Channel 4 on Tuesday

PHOTOGRAPHS: MARK BOURDILLON/LOVE PRODUCTIONS/CHANNEL 4/PA; DES WILLIE/BBC

‘I knew I would never see my bike again’

Bicycle theft is rampant – yet the police close 90% of cases without identifying or charging a suspect. **Sirin Kale** speaks to the victims who are fighting back



Megan Kedzlie with the stolen bike that she retrieved

It took thieves just 47 seconds to steal Rosie Wetherhill’s ebike from outside a Chinese takeaway.

Wetherhill, a 23-year-old bike courier from Leeds, had considered locking her bike to the railing when she went in to collect the order, but she knew the takeaway was fast. So she locked the back wheel with a D-lock instead. A mistake. As she saw her £1,300 ebike disappear around a corner, Wetherhill felt a sense of dread. “I knew I would probably never see that bike again,” she says. “Because I know how it is.” The bike wasn’t insured. She’d only had it for two months.

She called 999, and told police that the bike was fitted with a tracking device, but it wasn’t working. They told her to call back if it started working again. A few days later, an officer called. “He told me that if there was CCTV from the Chinese takeaway, then I would need to go and get that myself because the police were not going to do it for me,” says Wetherhill. “It was quite insulting.”

If you’re a cyclist and live in the UK, it is likely that, at some point, someone will have stolen, or attempted to steal, your bike. Analysis of crime statistics from July 2021 to June this year compiled by the Liberal Democrats found almost 90% of bike thefts are closed by police without a suspect being identified or charged. In London in 2021, the Metropolitan police charged a suspect in just 1% of reported bike thefts. In 2022, a highly critical report into the police’s handling of theft and burglary warned that “most victims aren’t getting the justice they deserve”. “Things are changing in the police,” says Dr Kate Tudor, a criminologist at Durham University. “But not fast enough.”

“It’s a crime where there is no jeopardy for the perpetrators,” says Tom Parker, 35, a marketing worker from near Epsom. In July, Parker witnessed two teenagers stealing a bike outside a Surrey train station. “I ran at them, shouting,” Parker says. They threw the bike at him and disappeared. Parker called 999. “‘We can’t do anything,’” he recalls the handler telling him, advising him to take the bike home. “But then,” Parker told her, frustrated, “*I’ve* stolen it!”

Parker posted about the incident in a local Facebook group. The following morning, he rang Surrey police. “I said, ‘I have this bike. I don’t want it in my garage. I can’t be the guardian of it for ever.’” The police officer told him to keep posting on Facebook. “They said,” he remembers, “‘We can’t call it a crime, because no one has reported it.’ I said, ‘It is a crime! I saw it happening.’”

Just as he was beginning to despair, someone got in touch via Facebook. His bike had been stolen that evening – and he had reported it to the Metropolitan police. He shared his crime reference number with Parker and Parker reunited him with the bike. A few days later, Parker received an email from the police. He says it advised him that no one had reported the bike stolen. “I responded,” Parker says, “and said, ‘They did report it. Here’s the attachment. I consider the matter closed, because I gave the bike back!’”

As with Parker’s experience, where the police fail to act, local communities are fighting back. On Facebook, stolen bike groups monitor suspicious sales on Facebook Marketplace, eBay and Gumtree. On X, formerly known as Twitter, @StolenRide describes itself as “a community of eyes on the ground” and has more than 10,000 followers. After her bike was stolen, Wetherhill searched for it online every day. “I used to imagine stealing it back,” she says. She thought it would be exhilarating.

Megan Kedzlie, a 26-year-old administrator from London, has lived out Wetherhill’s fantasy. Her £300 road bike was stolen from outside a gym in Clapton in east London in January. “I was gutted,” says Kedzlie. Within days, she says, the Metropolitan police closed the investigation, despite the fact the theft was caught on CCTV. But Kedzlie wasn’t willing to let her bike go. “At the end of the day,” Kedzlie says, “it was *my* bike.”

Eventually, she found it advertised on Gumtree. “They had taken off my pannier rack, added a light to the front and a bottle holder,” says Kedzlie. “But I had got some new tires recently, and I was pretty sure those were my tires.” Kedzlie arranged to meet the seller. Then she called the police. “The police woman said, ‘Do not pick up the bike,’” Kedzlie says. “‘Do not go. You could get stabbed.’ I thought, ‘That is true.’ But I was peeved.”

With her housemates for backup, Kedzlie met the seller. She

inspected the bike, which she had registered with BikeRegister, the national cycle database. "I showed him the photo and the code and the crime number and I said, 'This is my bike.'" The seller blustered for a bit, before disappearing. Wheeling the bike back home, Kedzlie was giddy with joy. But looking back, she knows it was reckless.

Most bike thieves are not violent. In Cambridge, police estimate that 70% of cycle crime is committed by people with substance abuse problems. "We have these chaotic, disastrous offenders," says Tudor, "who tend to have heavy drug habits. They take bikes opportunistically. They sell them for a flat fee to informal handlers within local criminal networks, usually for about £50." Tudor has interviewed these offenders. "They come across as quite vulnerable," she says.

But some robberies are committed by more organised and violent criminals. "They make informed decisions about which bikes to sell and which bikes to leave," says Tudor. Sometimes, gangs identify victims on high-value bikes and follow them home.

"The first thought that went through my head," says Phil Arkinstall, a 42-year-old telecoms worker from Walthamstow, east London, "was, 'I don't want to get stabbed for the sake of a bike.'" In June, Arkinstall was cycling down a path in north-east London when three men surrounded him. "One of the guys started to punch me," he says. Another made off with his £3,000 road bike. Arkinstall was shaken, but unharmed. Days previously, a cyclist was robbed on the same path: he was hospitalised with a broken jaw and missing teeth. As far as Arkinstall is aware, no arrests have been made. "I guess the police know what they are doing," he says uncertainly.

These incidents have eroded public trust in the police even further. "We have these ideas of what the police are there for," says Andy Higgins of policing thinktank The Police Foundation. "If something bad happens, the police are there for you. Or they should be." In policing terms, bike theft is a high-volume, low-level crime. But that's not how its victims experience it. "These things may be mundane and transactional from the police point of view," says Higgins, "but they actually are not to many people."

Bike theft "disproportionately affects those on low incomes", says Dr Will Norman, the walking and cycling commissioner for London. "Bikes offer cheap travel for people on low incomes, and replacing a bike is a big part of someone's income. If you're self-employed, or on a zero-hours contract, you're less likely to be able to access things like a cycle-to-work scheme." It took Wetherhill six months to save up for her ebike. Without it, she's had to go back to doing deliveries on her old pushbike. Her earnings have dropped from about £80 a day to £50. "It's a massive blow to me financially," she says.

The loss of a bike is an inconvenience that has financial implications, but it also represents something deeper. "We pay a lot of tax," says Kedzlie. "We put faith in the fact that we are supposed to be in a system where police can look at thefts and assaults, but then something happens and this item that I have loved and used every day is gone."

In response to growing public anger, the home secretary Suella Braverman announced in August that police forces will investigate all "reasonable lines of inquiry" when dealing with crimes such as theft. But the police, Higgins points out, "already have a duty to follow all reasonable leads".

One force determined to tackle cycling crime is Cambridgeshire constabulary. "We were hammered," says Insp Ed McNeill, "with cycle crime. Per capita, Cambridge was the worst place in the country." Since 2020, they have reduced cycle crime by 60% by promoting bike registration, upgrading cycle parking and imposing criminal behaviour orders on repeat offenders. "We don't always get it right," says McNeill. "We will get receipt of information and sometimes we don't act quick enough."

Police forces had their real-terms funding cut by 19% from 2010/2011 to 2018/2019. "People get very angry about the police and their shortcomings," says Tudor. "But they are constantly given political directives they have to adhere to. They have funding cuts and staffing cuts. It is an impossible task."



Rosie Wetherhill and her £1,300 ebike that was stolen

"The first thought I had was, 'I don't want to get stabbed for the sake of a bike'

It is not that the police don't care about bike theft. "Every police officer you speak to," says Tudor, "gets really frustrated." And the public does recognise the pressures the police are under. "I am not here to bash the police," says Parker. "They have to prioritise what they can do." But the impact of such thefts can be profound. After Wetherhill's bike was stolen, she grew depressed. "I couldn't face going outside," she says. It was difficult to motivate herself to go to work on her old pushbike. When she did, everything was harder. "Pushing all that weight takes a toll on your body." She is looking for a new job. "Something office-based, with less risk involved."



A suspect was charged in just 1% of reported bike thefts in London

And there is a societal cost. Research from Transport for London shows that 62% of people reduced the amount they cycled after their bikes were stolen. "Cycling plays a huge role in improving health," says Norman. "It reduces congestion and carbon emissions. It improves mental health. It provides cheap transport for those who need it. If people's bikes are stolen, it has a significant impact on the positive change we're trying to bring about in cities."

There are signs that things might be improving. Norman tells me that London saw a 13% fall in reported bike thefts between 2021 and 2022, according to the Metropolitan police. He is in the process of implementing the first ever cycle parking plan in the capital; secure bike parking is now a requirement for all new developments.

But there is a limit to what police can do. Most bikes are unregistered, making it impossible to prove ownership. (Anyone can register their bike for free at BikeRegister.com). Tudor believes reform is necessary. "We need to mandate the registration of bikes at the point of sale," she says. There is a need for education around locks; people should buy the best-quality lock they can afford, ideally one with a Sold Secure gold or diamond rating, or angle grinder-resistant locks. Companies such as Spokesafe allow members of the public to rent secure bike parking for a fee.

But even a registered bike, secured with a sturdy lock in a well-lit area, can be stolen and resold within hours online. "The thing about bikes," says Tudor, "is that it's so easy to sell them." She would like online platforms to require frame numbers to be listed on adverts, to enable buyers to check if those bikes have been reported as stolen. "They say it would drive business elsewhere," says Tudor, "and introduce complications to the listing process." In reality, she feels their unwillingness is commercially driven - such a move would reduce sales. In the absence of these measures, people should ask for a bike frame number before purchasing a secondhand bike - a reputable seller will have no qualms providing this - and run it through BikeRegister's online portal to ensure the bike they want to buy hasn't been stolen.

Without these reforms, it is likely that much-loved bikes will continue vanishing from railings and lamp-posts and sheds across the country. Often only a seat post remains, or a frame, or a solitary wheel - visual reminders of this crimewave. Not that Wetherhill needs a reminder. She still searches for her lost ebike online, although she has scant hope of finding it. She wouldn't consider buying an expensive bike again. "You just can't have one," Wetherhill says. "Because it will get stolen. And that is very demoralising."

PHOTOGRAPHS: MARIOCHUKWU WASHINGTON-IHIEME AND FLORENCE LAW/ THE GUARDIAN; ALAMY; PHOTOSHOPIX/GETTY/ISTOCKPHOTO


A man is attacked while wearing a Chiron-X1 High-Impact Fighting Suit

Making a killing

Military spending is at an all-time high – and there is no shortage of hardware to buy. **Oliver Wainwright** visits the vast 'supermarket of death' that is Europe's biggest arms fair

A body convulses on a table, with broken bones poking from a stump of torn flesh below the knee, one arm gruesomely peppered with gunshot wounds, as men in military uniforms look on approvingly.

"He bleeds, he moves, he breathes, he has a pulse," says the smiling sales rep. "His eyes even react to light. We have a canine version too, which barks and whines – and it comes with interchangeable injured limbs."

I am perusing the medical zone of Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI), Europe's biggest arms fair, which takes place every two years in the Excel convention centre in east London. It is a sprawling supermarket of modern warfare, where the world's armies buy the latest AI-guided missiles and tanks, inspect giant warships moored in the Royal Docks, and queue to take a turn sitting in the cockpits of fighter jets.

Every military requirement is covered here, from the writhing "high-fidelity trauma simulators", to camouflage dealers showcasing their prints, to stands selling medals and epaulette tassels. Joystick manufacturers jostle with makers of invisibility cloaks next to endless ranks of machine guns. Sleek submarines sparkle on spotlit plinths while flocks of missile-carrying drones dangle from the ceiling like menacing mobiles.

"This year feels much busier than usual," one bomb salesman tells me, standing by a gleaming rack of cone-shaped warheads, polished like trophies in a glass cabinet. "It seems war is back in a big way. People are looking to stock up." Whereas attendees of this murderous bazaar may once have felt sheepish, they now march through the entrance gates with their heads held high. War, long something that happened far away, is now on our doorstep.

In an auditorium nearby, Britain's most senior military officer, Adm Sir Tony Radakin, informs a rapt audience about the recently increased threat levels, noting that Russia's war on Ukraine has highlighted the vulnerability of our cities to deadly missile and drone attacks. It's now easy to "get close to a country and fly drones in", he says. "We need to have a conversation about integrated missile defence."

War in Ukraine has sharpened minds and increased government spending on defence. Total global military expenditure reached an all-time high of $2.2tn (£1.8tn) in 2022, with Europe seeing the steepest annual increase in 30 years – the total surpassing, in real terms, that of the last year of the cold war. The UK has the highest military budget in central and western Europe, at $68.5bn, and the government has committed to increase it. As the hi-tech wares on show in this marketplace of munitions reveal, there are plenty of expensive toys for it to splurge on.

Covering the mind-boggling area of 14 football pitches, the exhibition is organised into zones for land, naval, aerospace and space warfare. In between, there are sections dedicated to medical innovations, security, manufacturing and future tech, along with national pavilions, each showcasing its country's arms specialities, like a bloodthirsty Eurovision song contest.


'It comes with interchangeable injured limbs' … a trauma training dummy

At the Israel pavilion, a company hawks "high-penetration wireless communication for indoor robotics and drones", showing videos of drones swooping through bombed-out buildings, looking for prey like a swarm of mosquitoes. Brazil features a stall offering "ammunition, bombs, rockets and fuses", with a bowl of complimentary sweets, while a rifle company in the US section lures punters with a free calendar of busty models draped across its anti-aircraft guns.

Norway touts its all-weather reputation, exhibiting a sledge equipped with a machine gun, while Switzerland opts for an old-school vibe, showing off its Victorinox Swiss Army knives – including models especially customised for different security forces, from the German navy to the Malaysian police. "The Malaysians are always the fanciest when it comes to special features," says the sales manager, showing me a knife with every tool coated in a sleek matte black finish, designed to match their uniforms.

Nearby, I encounter a mannequin covered in a thick furry shroud of white fabric petals, giving it the look of the abominable snowman. It turns out to be a real-life invisibility cloak. "It protects soldiers from UV cameras, thermal cameras and infra-red cameras," says Kiran Joshi of Indian firm Entremonde Polyecoaters. "It has a special coating on the fabric, so it merges with the surrounding terrain and makes the soldier invisible." A few stands away I bump into a robotic, drone-carrying dog – whose applications range from perimeter security to bomb disposal – displayed near snout-shaped helmets with ear defenders (*pictured above*), designed to be worn by dogs on the battlefield.

As the host nation, the British armed forces get top billing, showing off the products of the latest projects. At the army stand, staffed by a crowd of young soldiers in neatly pressed khaki uniforms, I am introduced to the new armoured vehicles of the troubled £5.5bn Ajax programme – an "advanced, fully digitised land vehicle system delivering transformational change", manufactured by General Dynamics in Merthyr Tydfil, Wales. It is the biggest single order in more than two decades, for 589 vehicles at a cost of almost £10m each. Running more than six years late, Ajax has been repeatedly criticised by the National Audit Office, the defence select committee and the public accounts committee, branded "a complete and utter disaster" by the former head of the Royal Navy.

"Nothing like this has ever been seen before," says a jovial Maj David Hughes, slapping the armoured flank of one of the new reconnaissance vehicles as if it were a prized thoroughbred. "It gives us

PHOTOGRAPHS: GETTY IMAGES; SHUTTERSTOCK; OLIVER WAINWRIGHT



enhanced lethality, mobility and all-weather intelligence."

He shows me its 40mm cannon, which has a range of more than 1.5 miles (2.5km), as well as long-range thermal sights and acoustic sensors that can pick up gun noises and plot the target directly on the commander's screen. "With a click of two buttons," he says, "they can pass that information to an unmanned drone or an Apache helicopter. Another press of a button, and the Apache pilot destroys the target on one pass."

Nearby hangs a massive jet-powered drone, of the kind that might soon be part of this digitally networked battlefield, carrying a hefty payload of three laser-guided Brimstone missiles. This is the Hydra 400, which uses hybrid propulsion technology (rotors and jet engines) to carry 400kg of bombs. Compact and portable, it only takes six minutes to assemble, giving troops "an Apache gunship in the boot of their car", as one source put it. Next to it, smaller drones hang alongside their mothership.

"They all have onboard AI cameras," says Maj Matthew McGarvey-Miles, lead of the army warfighting experiment, a flagship programme where the latest technology is developed. "They can identify targets and track them automatically, without an operator." These devices are still at testing stage, but the army appears to be heading rapidly in an automated, connected, lethally digital direction.

"We are responding to the operating environment that we see in Ukraine," says the army's chief of the general staff, Patrick Sanders, keen to stress that these unmanned killing machines need skilled humans, too. "When the electromagnetic spectrum is so heavily contested, automation fails and the skill of the pilot predominates. We need 'war fighters' – whether they are cyber specialists, drone pilots or infantry soldiers – to be stronger, faster, more intelligent and more resilient."

The nature of these unmanned weapons – and the kind of remote fighters the army is looking for – is having a knock-on effect on how the physical controls are designed. My eye is caught by a small stand that glimmers with hundreds of tiny switches, buttons and joysticks, giving it the look of a fiendishly complex submarine control room.

Steve Blackwell of Apem components says: "The big thing now is thumb-stick controllers. So many people in the military now come from the Xbox generation, so they're used to thumb-sticks. Gone are the days when you'd have big pneumatic or hydraulic controls."

He hands me a controller that looks just like a gaming joypad – a deceptively playful device for something that could unleash hellfire on a pixellated target, hundreds of miles away. Nimble thumbs, it seems, will define the future of warfare. Tomorrow's battles will be waged from the safety of a gaming chair (also on display), with the assistance of algorithms.

Outside the exhibition halls, reality hits. "Please be aware," a polite protester tells visitors, "that many of the countries you are doing business with are on the UK government's human rights priority list." Emily Apple of Campaign Against Arms Trade is more direct. "DSEI is a marketplace in death," she says. "Deals done here will cause misery across the world, causing global instability and devastating people's lives. Arms dealers only care about perpetuating conflict, because conflict increases profits for their shareholders. It's time we shut this arms fair down for good."

Back inside, bottles of champagne have appeared. The face of a young black female mannequin stares out from a body bag, while delegates toast their billion-dollar deals of destruction.

"This year is much busier than usual. War is back. People are looking to stock up



'Enhanced lethality' … hardware and clothing

Mats Bäcker

'Martin Fröst is the world's most famous clarinet player and he loves to be photographed. Like the Beatles, he knows the importance of a strong image'



My so-called career started in the mid-70s in the punk era. I was 17 when punk arrived and its spirit influenced me profoundly. Anyone could play music or be a photographer – anybody could be anything. One of my first pictures was of Joe Strummer. I tagged along with a journalist friend and knocked on his motel door. A week later I was hanging out with the Jam in Malmö. I worked for many years as a rock photographer, and then as a photojournalist in Nicaragua and South Africa, but today I mostly work with classical musicians. My photographs try to bring that rock'n'roll energy and visual language into classical music and opera.

This photo was taken on a sunny day in Stockholm at the Drottningholm Palace theatre, part of one of the Swedish king and queen's residences. It's a fantastic 18th-century building, a Unesco heritage site which hosts an opera festival each summer.

I was shooting the cover for Martin Fröst's Mozart Clarinet Concerto for BIS Records, and we chose the location because we wanted the ambience of something old and beautiful. The theatre dates from the time that Mozart was alive. Fröst is arguably the most famous clarinet player in the world and we're good friends. He loves to be photographed, which is convenient for me. You could call him vain but, like the Beatles, he knows the importance of a strong image.

We were shooting backstage but Martin was really stiff. He might like to be photographed but he's overly conscious of how he will come out in the pictures, so it's hard to get him off balance. When I shoot dancers I always want to catch them off balance to capture the movement. Similarly, portraits need to be captured in this in-between stage.

The CV

Born: *Hagfors, Sweden, 1958*
Trained: *MA in photography in Stockholm*
Influences: *'Irving Penn, Anton Corbijn, Pennie Smith'*
High point: *'Quitting my job at the opera and becoming a freelancer again'*
Low point: *'Getting depressed during my last few years at the Royal Opera in Stockholm. I was bored of shooting the same stage every night'*
Top tip: *'Look. Practise. Specialise. Immerse yourself in what you are interested in, then you will take good photos.'*



I had heard that fashion photographers get models to make lots of faces and move around to get relaxed, so I told Martin to start jumping about. We'd been taking photos in the shadows because the sunlight coming through the window was really harsh. I started photographing him as he was playing around making silly faces, and snapped this as he stepped into the sunlight.

The second I took it I was thinking, "I hope this comes out well." I looked in the camera afterwards and it seemed really freaky. My favourite part of the picture is his eye: a little black dot. It has always reminded me of Edvard Munch's Scream. It also reminds me of my most famous photograph, Iggy Pop giving the middle finger. The composition is similar but instead of the middle finger there's a clarinet.

This crazy picture didn't make the album cover. BIS are conservative, and it was felt that the audience for classical music are as well. But it was the biggest picture of my exhibition Mats Bäcker Classics, where it was blown up to a 2x2 metre print. There's a great photo of me and Martin standing in front of it, screaming with the photo.

I only found classical music later in my life. The Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm put an ad in the paper saying they wanted a new photographer. My friends urged me to apply but I thought it sounded boring. But I did apply, I got the job, and the first opera I shot was Madama Butterfly. I was in tears while shooting because I was so touched by the music and the story. It was mind-blowing.

Interview by Harry Thorfinn-George. See more at matsbacker.se

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY MATS BÄCKER



Chris Packham … prepared to take a stand

Review Chris Packham: Is It Time to Break the Law?, Channel 4

An extraordinary, anguished call to action to halt the climate crisis

★★★★★

Jack Seale



Documentary presenters don't usually make a virtue out of bewilderment, but these are confounding times. Chris Packham: Is It Time to Break the Law? - an extraordinary, anguished think piece - opens with an audio montage of Packham's desperate thoughts about the climate crisis. This chattering inner monologue is accompanied by the unforgettable sight of the presenter's face slowly being smothered in thick, black crude oil.

OK, the "oil" is probably treacle, but Packham's film does involve the idea of putting his own safety and future on the line. It is beyond thought-provoking: it follows him as he deals with a profound dilemma about how to live his life, and what that life is for. The climate apocalypse is here and, despite fires and floods around the world, there is still - maddeningly - little sign of the change needed to avert the deeper catastrophe that is coming. Voting hasn't worked. Peaceful protest hasn't worked. Rational debate hasn't worked. What now?

The problem is crystallised by a chat with John Gummer, Lord Deben. He chaired the government's climate change committee and co-authored a report that slammed Britain's green initiatives as dangerously inadequate. "We should be on a war footing," he tells Packham, noting that a 1C rise in global temperatures is already causing mayhem, and we are headed for 2C or 3C. But when asked about radical protests, Gummer bristles, warning against "counter-productive" action and insisting, "We have to have the rule of law."

Packham, however, is deeply sympathetic towards the ordinary people who have become some of Britain's most hardline climate activists, via actions organised by the guerrilla pressure group Just Stop Oil. The threat of arrest and imprisonment does not put them off their attempts to safeguard humanity's future. Packham approves, commentating as a dozen or so concerned folk cause bedlam in London with a slow-walk protest, then being invited to observe two Just Stop Oil members daub orange paint on the offices of the controversial thinktank Policy Exchange.

Visiting another Just Stop Oil activist, who is serving a considerable prison sentence for scaling a bridge on the Dartford Crossing last year, Packham opines that society ought to feel shame at putting principled people behind high walls and razor wire. But the risks these pioneers are willing to brave are not confined to retaliation by the state. Viral clips of the actions of Just Stop Oil increasingly feature members of the public taking grim pleasure in reacting with violence, from shoving activists out of the road to driving heavy goods vehicles at them. Packham states that those people have been riled up by "the rightwing media", referring to a Mail Online article in which Just Stop Oil activists are called "zealots" who have formed a "mob".

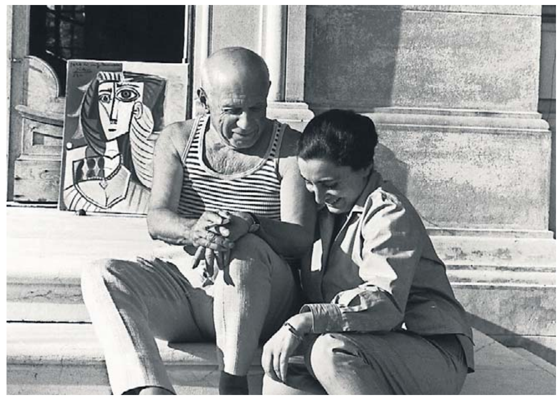
Packham is still inclined towards extreme measures - not just approving of them, but participating in them. He is remorseless in his criticism of his own contribution to date. Regular conservationism, the discipline to which he has dedicated his life, has failed, he says, boldly firing shots at his sector's most senior figure by including a clip of David Attenborough giving a rousing speech at the UN. "The world listened," says Packham of the great naturalist's oratory. "And by 9.30 the next morning, the world had forgotten." Nelson Mandela and Emmeline Pankhurst, Packham reminds us, did not confine themselves to merely asking for change nicely.

He meets the Swedish ecology professor Andreas Malm, whose book How to Blow Up a Pipeline is worth the publishing deal for the title alone. Malm stresses that he doesn't mean literally blowing things up. Well, not necessarily. But he does advocate sabotaging pipelines or other fossil-fuel infrastructure.

Could Attenborough's obvious successor as our leading presenter of natural history television really risk throwing all that away by turning up to an oil refinery with a hacksaw and a plan? His final interviewee, Just Stop Oil and Extinction Rebellion co-founder Roger Hallam, thinks a revered public figure being banged up could be the tipping point the movement needs.

Packham does not announce his intention to commit an imprisonable offence, although he does reiterate his support for climate activists who cross that line. There is one obvious reason to hope he doesn't get himself sent to jail: it would stop him making programmes as honest, as challenging and as urgently relevant as this.

Picasso: The Beauty and the Beast
9pm, BBC Two



It has been 50 years since the death of one of the most celebrated artists in history. Since then, his legacy has been scrutinised, mostly concerning his relationships with, and treatment of, women. This compelling documentary series hears from family members and art historians to deepen our understanding of a man of many contradictions. The first of three parts starts in the brothels he visited as a young man.
Hollie Richardson

Classic Movies: The Story of The Graduate
8pm, Sky Arts
Ian Nathan and his reliable band of experts explain that the "affair with an older woman" element of 1967's box office hit was just surface. They delve into how star Dustin Hoffman and director Mike Nichols, both inexperienced underdogs, captured the pain of a generation unsure about what their futures held.
Jack Seale

Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs
8.30pm, ITV
A dangerously overweight beagle/basset hound cross needs to shed the pounds, while an elderly chihuahua with cataracts has to be coaxed to give a pee sample. "I've got to get a proper job, like something on the Orient Express," says O'Grady, as he rolls around the floor in a play-tunnel. No need: the animals clearly adored him.
Ali Catterall

Taskmaster
9pm, Channel 4
Sometimes a formula isn't a bad thing. Taskmaster is a perfect example - as the show's 16th season (in eight years!) begins, its return feels as comforting as an old winter sweater. Greg Davies and Alex Horne are joined by Julian Clary, Susan Wokoma, Lucy Beaumont, Sam Campbell and Sue Perkins. This week: peas, ducks and blindfolds. Business as usual.
Phil Harrison

The TikTok Effect
9pm, BBC Three
TikTok has more than a billion monthly global users and its influence is way more than just cute dog and Taylor Swift videos. In this alarming documentary, the BBC's disinformation and social media correspondent, Marianna Spring, speaks with insiders to investigate how the platform's "frenzies" have triggered social movements and even riots. **HR**

The Lovers
9pm, Sky Atlantic
After catching her boyfriend, Seamus, rolling around on the streets of Belfast with a woman she has never seen before (Janet), Frankie ends up whisking them both away for the night. Is that as catastrophic as it seems? Somehow, the trio end up becoming friends. **HR**

What's On
Scan the QR code below to sign up for the What's On newsletter, our free TV email with the best reviews, news and exclusive writing direct to your inbox every Monday

BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **9.15** Morning Live (T) **10.0** Fraud Squad (T) **10.45** Claimed and Shamed (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **1.0** News (T) **1.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.45** Doctors (T) **2.15** Money for Nothing (T) (R) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **3.45** Garden Rescue (T) **4.30** The Finish Line (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

8.0 **Sort Your Life Out With Stacey Solomon** (T) Stacey and her team help Venicia and Elisha, their four children and Venicia's 11-year-old brother.

9.0 **Ambulance** (T) An urgent call from someone threatening to use a nerve agent against the emergency services leads to a major incident standby.

10.0 **News** (T)
10.30 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.40 **Question Time** (T) Fiona Bruce chairs the topical debate in Ipswich.
11.40 **Newscast** (T) BBC journalists Adam Fleming and Chris Mason present a weekly round-up from Westminster.
12.10 **Weather for the Week Ahead** (T) **12.15** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 **Escape to the Country** (T) (R) **7.15** Garden Rescue (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Coastal Defenders (T) (R) **9.0** Nicky Campbell (T) **10.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics Live (T) **1.0** Impossible (T) (R) **1.45** Eggheads (T) (R) **2.15** Murder, Mystery and My Family: Case Closed? (T) (R) **3.0** Kelvin's Big Farming Adventure (T) (R) **3.30** Great Canadian Railway Journeys (T) (R) **4.0** Serengeti (T) (R) **5.0** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** House of Games (T) (R) **6.30** Tales from a Kitchen Garden (T) **7.0** The Warship: Tour of Duty (T) (R)

8.0 **The Hidden World of Hospitality With Tom Kerridge** (T) How the industry delivers exceptional service on a huge scale.

9.0 **Picasso: The Beauty and the Beast** (T) New series. An exploration of the life, death and legacy of the Spanish artist, starting with his early working years in Paris.

10.0 **Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing** (T) (R)
10.30 **Newsnight** (T) Weather
11.15 **Alex Brooker: Disability and Me** (T) (R) Documentary.
12.15 **Sign Zone** Living Next Door to Putin (T) (R) **1.15** Laura Kuenssberg: State of Chaos (T) (R) **2.15** Strictly Come Dancing (T) (R) **4.0** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV1

6.0 **Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** James Martin's Spanish Adventure (T) **3.0** Tenable (T) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) **5.0** The Chase (T) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **7.30** Emmerdale (T)

8.30 **Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs** (T) Paul meets an old chihuahua with numerous ailments, and also helps a dangerously overweight beagle-basset hound cross lose some weight.

9.0 **My Mum, Your Dad** (T) The couples are all sent on extravagant dates where they discuss their plans.

10.0 **News** (T) Weather
10.30 **Local News** (T) Weather
10.45 **Secrets of the Krays** (T) (R)
11.40 **My Mum, Your Dad** (T) (R)
12.30 **Extreme E Highlights** (T) **1.25** All Elite Wrestling: Rampage (T) **2.20** Loose Women (T) (R) **3.05** Tenable (T) (R) **3.55** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.05** Oti Mabuse's Breakfast Show (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.05 **Countdown** (T) (R) **6.45** Cheers (T) (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **8.25** Frasier (T) (R) **9.55** Chateau DIY (T) (R) **10.55** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces (T) (R) **11.55** News (T) **12.0** Steph's Packed Lunch (T) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** A New Life in the Sun (T) (R) **6.0** The Simpsons (T) (R) **6.30** Hollyoaks (T) (R) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 **Kirstie and Phil's Love It Or List It** (T) (R) The hosts help Sarah and Jabzz decide whether to renovate their four-bed, one-bathroom house in Cheshire or sell it.

9.0 **Taskmaster** (T) New series. Julian Clary, Lucy Beaumont, Sam Campbell, Sue Perkins and Susan Wokoma take on new comic challenges.

10.0 **8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown** (T) (R)
11.05 **Sarah Millican: Control Enthusiast** (T) (R)
12.05 **24 Hours to Hell and Back** (T) (R) **12.55** George Michael: Portrait of An Artist (T) (R) **2.40** FILM Gifted (Marc Webb, 2017) (T) **4.25** Undercover Boss USA (T) (R) **5.15** Couples Come Dine With Me (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake!** **9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.15** Storm Huntley (T) **12.40** Alexis Conran (T) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM Murder in Cherry Springs (Letia Clouston, 2021) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Susan Calman's Grand Day Out (T) (R) **7.0** Alexander Armstrong in Sri Lanka (T) (R)

8.0 **Five-a-Day: The Big Con?** (T) Investigating the 20-year-old government campaign to stop the national obesity crisis, and how some producers wrongly exploit it.

9.0 **Peter Sellers: The Dark Side of the Goon** (T) A portrait of one of Britain's greatest comic actors, star of the Pink Panther movies.

10.30 **A&E After Dark** (T) (R) A woman has impaled her eye on a tent peg.
11.30 **Skin A&E** (T) (R)
12.30 **Police Interceptors** (T) (R) **1.25** Live Casino Show (T) **3.25** How to Have a Better Orgasm (T) (R) **4.15** Never Teach Your Wife to Drive (T) (R) **5.05** Great Scientists (T) (R) **5.35** Paw Patrol (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **Great Coastal Railway Journeys** (T) (R) Michael Portillo travels to Milford Haven. **7.30** Climbing Great Buildings (T) (R) Glasgow School of Art.

8.0 **Hidden Wales With Will Millard** (T) (R) The writer and adventurer examines the history of Wales.

9.0 FILM **Judgment at Nuremberg** (Stanley Kramer, 1962) (T) Fact-based courtroom drama about the Nuremberg trials of top Nazis, starring Spencer Tracy, Burt Lancaster and Judy Garland.

11.55 FILM **Tulip Fever** (Justin Chadwick, 2017) (T) In 17th-century Amsterdam, an artist falls for a married woman. Historical romance, starring Alicia Vikander and Dane DeHaan.
1.30 **Great Coastal Railway Journeys** (T) (R) **2.0** Climbing Great Buildings (T) (R) **2.30** Hidden Wales (T) (R)

Other channels

BBC Three
7.0pm Frozen Planet **8.0** Gavin & Stacey **8.30** Gavin & Stacey **8.55** The Catch Up **9.0** The TikTok Effect **9.55** The Instagram Effect **10.55** Bad Education **11.25** Bad Education **11.55** The Bold Type **12.35** The TikTok Effect **1.30** Boot Dreams: Now Or Never **2.30** Gavin & Stacey **3.0** Bad Education **3.30** Bad Education

Dave
6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Yianni: Supercar Customiser **7.35** Yianni: Supercar Customiser **8.0** Top Gear **9.0** DIY SOS: The Big Build **10.0** Railroad Australia **11.0** Rick Stein's Far Eastern Odyssey **12.0** Ultimate Movers **1.0** Sin City Motors **2.0** Top Gear **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Australian Ninja Warrior **6.0** Rick Stein's Long Weekends **7.0** Richard Osman's House of Games **7.40** Richard Osman's House of Games **8.20** Would I Lie to You? **9.0** QI XL **10.0** Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps **10.40** Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps **11.20** Gavin & Stacey **12.0** Gavin & Stacey **12.40** Mock the Week **1.20** Would I Lie to You? **2.0** Richard Osman's House of Games **2.30** Richard Osman's House of Games **3.0** This Country **4.0** Teleshopping

E4
6.0am Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Married at First Sight UK **8.0** Melissa & Joey **9.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **10.0** The Big Bang Theory **10.30** The Big Bang Theory **11.0** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory **12.30** The Big Bang Theory **1.0** The Big Bang Theory **1.30** The Big Bang Theory **2.0** The Goldbergs **2.30** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Married at First Sight UK **5.0** The Big Bang Theory **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.0** The Big Bang Theory **6.30** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Young Sheldon **8.0** First Dates Ireland **9.0** Married at First Sight UK **10.05** Joanne and Vogue's Sex Drive **10.55** Gogglebox **12.0** First Dates **1.0** Rick and Morty **1.35** Teenage Euthanasia **2.05** Married at First Sight UK **3.05** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **3.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **3.50** The Goldbergs **4.15** The Goldbergs **4.40** Black-ish **5.30** Modern Family

Film4
11.0am FILM At Gunpoint (1955) **12.40** FILM 23 Paces to Baker Street (1956) **2.45** FILM Cat Ballou (1965) **4.40** FILM Earth vs the Flying Saucers (1956) **6.20** FILM A Knight's Tale (2001) **9.0** FILM Fantasy Island (2020) **11.10** FILM Daredevil (2003) **1.15** FILM Last Action Hero (1993)

ITV2
6.0am CITV **9.0** One Tree Hill **10.0** Dawson's Creek **11.0** Love Bites **12.0** Dinner Date **1.0** Family Fortunes **2.0** Chuck **3.05** One Tree Hill **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Dinner Date **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Family Fortunes **8.0** Superstore **8.30** Superstore **9.0** Family Guy **11.30** American Dad! **12.0** American Dad! **12.30** Superstore **1.0** Superstore **1.30** The Sex Lives of College Girls **2.0** The Sex Lives of College Girls **2.30** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.55** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping **5.0** The Epic Tales of Captain Underpants **5.25** Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated **5.45** Craig of the Creek

Sky Max
6.0am Supergirl **7.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** Supergirl **12.0** The Flash **1.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** Rob & Romesh vs Drag **9.0** The Blacklist **10.0** Never Mind the Buzzcocks **10.45** Warrior **11.50** Fantasy Island **1.40** Road Wars **2.05** Stop, Search, Seize **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** Highway Patrol

Sky Arts
6.0am Gilbert and Sullivan: A Motley Pair **6.30** Beethoven: The Complete Symphonies **7.0** André Rieu: Welcome to My World **8.0** The Joy of Painting **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Julia Roberts **12.0** The Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** Renoir: Revered and Reviled **3.0** The Art of the Garden **4.0** Discovering: Richard Gere **5.0** Tales of the Unexpected **6.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.0** The Joy of Painting **7.30** The Joy of Painting **8.0** Classic Movies: The Story of the Graduate **9.0** Mildred Pierce **10.20** The Directors **11.20** The Seventies **12.20** A Brush With Comedy **2.20** Ai Weiwei: Yours Truly **4.0** Marina Abramović Takes Over TV **5.0** Inside Art: Eileen Agar at Whitechapel Gallery **5.30** Inside Art: Linda McCartney Retrospective

Sky Atlantic
6.0am Urban Secrets **7.55** Six Feet Under **10.05** Ray Donovan **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** Raised By Wolves **3.30** Six Feet Under **5.40** Ray Donovan **7.55** Game of Thrones **9.0** The Lovers **9.35** Dreamland **10.05** Winning Time: The Rise of the Lakers Dynasty **11.10** Billions **1.30** In Treatment **2.0** Drift: Partners in Crime **4.0** Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets **5.0** Billions


Judgment at Nuremberg, BBC Four

Radio

Radio 3
6.30am Breakfast **9.0** Essential Classics **12.0** Composer of the Week: Girolamo Frescobaldi (4/5) **1.0** Lunchtime Concert. Performances from tenor Robin Tritschler, baritone James Atkinson and mezzo Marta Fontanals-Simmons with pianist Simon Lepper from the NI Opera Festival of Voice 2023. **2.0** Afternoon Concert. The Ulster Orchestra perform Dvořák's Eighth Symphony. Plus, Mozart's Clarinet Concerto from Salzburg and Nielsen's Hymnus Amoris from Copenhagen. **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. At the Salzburg festival, Ingo Metzmacher conducts the SWR Symphony Orchestra, Stuttgart, in Messiaen's Éclairs sur l'Au-Dela. **10.0** Free Thinking. Jonathan Coe, Roland Allen and Dr Gill Partington talk to Lisa Mullen about the act of writing on paper. **10.45** The Essay: Unearthing Britannia's Tribes. Mandy Haggith on the voyages of Pytheas. (R) **11.0** The Night Tracks Mix **11.30** Unclassified. Isobel Waller-Bridge and Coby Sey at Bluedot festival. **12.30** Through the Night

Radio 4
6.0am Today **8.31** (LW) Yesterday in Parliament **9.0** In Our Time **9.45** (LW) Daily Service **9.45** (FM) Book of the Week: Material World. By Ed Conway. (4/5) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** Crossing Continents. How the war in Ukraine has changed a Norwegian town. (9/9) **11.30** Great Lives (R) **12.0** News **12.01** (LW) Shipping Forecast **12.04** You and Yours **12.30** All Consuming (10/10) **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** NatureBang. An examination of how birds learn to sing. **2.0** The Archers **2.15** Radio Waves. Sci-fi drama, by Magdalene Bird, Jack Fairey and Mohsen Shah. **3.0** Ramblings. Clare Balding embarks on a hilly hike in Cheshire. (1/6) **3.27** Radio 4 Appeal (R) **3.30** Open Book (R) **4.0** Taste (R) **4.30** Inside Science **5.0** PM **5.54** (LW) Shipping Forecast **6.0** News **6.30** My Teenage Diary. With writer and trans activist Juno Dawson. (4/6) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** The Briefing Room (14/18) **8.30** Anti-Building With Cedric Price. Tom Dyckhoff explores the life of the forward-thinking architect. (R) **9.0** Inside Science (R) **9.30** In Our Time **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: The Secret Hours. By Mick Herron. (4/10) **11.0** Tim Key's Late Night Poetry Programme (R) **11.30** One to One (R) **11.45** Today in Parliament **12.0** News **12.30** Book of the Week: Material World (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today **5.58** Tweet of the Day (R)

Radio 4 Extra
6.0am Paul Temple and the Conrad Case (2/8) **6.30** Death Speaks Another Language (5/6) **7.0** How to Find Home (4/10) **7.15** Hester (4/5) **7.30** Empire-ical Evidence (2/2) **8.0** Dad's Army (16/20) **8.30** Desmond Olivier Dingle's Compleat Life and Works of William Shakespeare (3/6) **9.0** Jest a Minute (1/6) **9.30** A Whole 'Nother Story (1/4) **10.0** Westwood (2/2) **11.0** Paul Temple (2/8) **11.30** Death Speaks Another Language (5/6) **12.0** How to Find Home (4/10) **12.15** Hester (4/5) **12.30** Empire-ical Evidence (2/2) **1.0** Dad's Army (16/20) **1.30** Desmond Olivier Dingle (3/6) **2.0** Jest a Minute (1/6) **2.30** A Whole 'Nother Story (1/4) **3.0** Westwood (2/2) **4.0** Paul Temple (2/8) **4.30** Death Speaks Another Language (5/6) **5.0** How to Find Home (4/10) **5.15** Hester (4/5) **5.30** Empire-ical Evidence (2/2) **6.0** Dad's Army (16/20) **6.30** Desmond Olivier Dingle (3/6) **7.0** Jest a Minute (1/6) **7.30** A Whole 'Nother Story (1/4) **8.0** Down By the River (2/3) **9.0** Great Lives (1/8) **9.30** The Long Drop (4/10) **9.45** The Dead Hour (4/10) **10.0** My Teenage Diary (3/6) **10.30** Micky Flanagan: What Chance Change? (2/4) **11.0** Hamish and Dougal: You'll Have Had Your Tea (2/6) **11.15** The in Crowd (6/6) **11.30** Rigor Mortis (5/6) **12.0** Westwood (2/2) **1.0** Paul Temple (2/8) **1.30** Death Speaks Another Language (5/6) **2.0** How to Find Home (4/10) **2.15** Hester (4/5) **2.30** Empire-ical Evidence (2/2) **3.0** Dad's Army (16/20) **3.30** Desmond Olivier Dingle (3/6) **4.0** Jest a Minute (1/6) **4.30** A Whole 'Nother Story (1/4) **5.0** The Jacobean Box

TODAY'S TRIVIA CORNER ANSWER 267KG

Puzzles

Yesterday's solutions

Wordsearch

E	C	N	E	L	I	S	U	B
S	D	A	Y	S	E	Y	F	D
I	L	I	S	M	H	U	T	N
G	R	O	I	I	E	W	C	O
N	L	T	R	D	O	O	G	B
A	N	S	A	T	N	M	A	R
L	L	E	E	T	N	S	G	A
R	H	A	A	V	H	O	A	C
U	E	C	R	D	A	R	C	R
O	T	I	N	M	S	W	E	E
F	A	C	T	I	V	E	O	E

Solution no 16,653

L	E	S	M	I	S	E	R	A	B	L	E	S
O		E		N		M		N		A		A
T	A	X	I	C	A	B		T	O	N	I	C
		T		A		R		E		K		R
E	G	A	D		E	Y	E	R	H	Y	M	E
A		N		A		O		I				D
V	O	T	I	N	G		F	O	R	M	I	C
E				T		S		R		A		O
S	O	B	R	I	E	T	Y		D	R	A	W
D		E		B		R		S		T		
R	I	N	G	O		A	S	C	R	I	B	E
O		I		D		T		A		N		G
P	E	N	N	Y	F	A	R	T	H	I	N	G

Sudoku no 6209

9	6	4	1	8	7	2	3	5
1	3	2	4	5	9	8	6	7
8	5	7	2	6	3	9	4	1
4	9	3	5	7	8	1	2	6
6	7	1	9	3	2	4	5	8
2	8	5	6	1	4	7	9	3
3	1	9	7	4	6	5	8	2
7	2	6	8	9	5	3	1	4
5	4	8	3	2	1	6	7	9

Word wheel

BAGATELLE

Suguru

1	3	1	4	3	5
5	4	2	5	1	4
2	1	3	4	2	5
4	5	2	1	3	1
2	3	4	5	4	2
1	5	2	3	1	3

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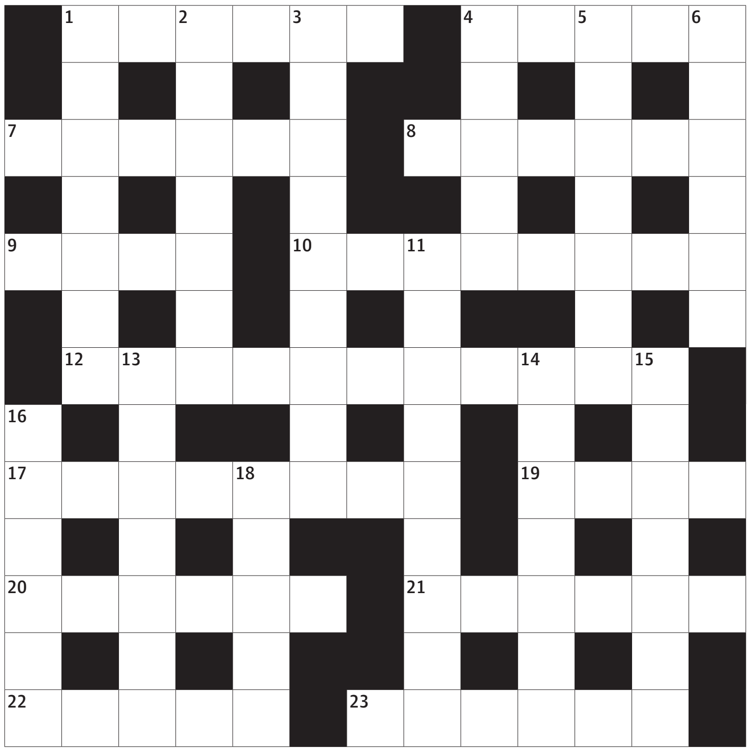
Quick crossword no 16,654

Across

1 Reliable (6)
4 Is art (anag) (5)
7 Annul (6)
8 Car running on petrol and electricity, say (6)
9 One goes on foot (4)
10 Early deliverer of the news (8)
12 Work of art set in the past (6,5)
17 Crestfallen (8)
19 One of four English rivers (of which one is Great and another Little) (4)
20 To some extent (2,1,3)
21 Hebrew prophet of the Old Testament, who was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire (6)
22 Tendency (5)
23 Forge (6)

Down

1 Cafe (3,4)
2 Ill-defined (7)
3 Transmitting speech and data electronically (9)
4 Chic (5)
5 Using oxygen to produce energy (7)
6 A long overnight flight (6)
11 Vain hope (4,5)
13 Subjugate (7)
14 So get it (anag) (7)
15 MDMA (7)
16 One hooked on 15? (6)
18 Oscar or Tony? (5)



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Sudoku no 6210

Hard. Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9. Printable version at theguardian.com/sudoku

					8	9		4
		3	2	7				
					1		7	
	2			8			9	
8	3						4	5
	4			5			6	
	6		1					
				4	6	5		
4		1	9					

Suguru

Fill the grid so that each square in an outlined block contains a digit. A block of two squares contains the digits 1 and 2, a block of three squares contains the digits 1, 2 and 3, and so on. No same digit appears in neighbouring squares, not even diagonally.

3					
	4		2		
	2			3	
					1

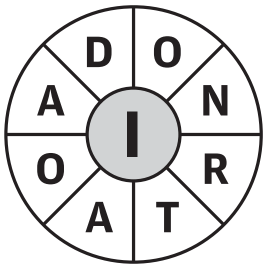
Wordsearch

Can you find 15 words about boxing in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

S	R	D	R	K	M	R	Y	M
E	T	O	F	E	O	V	A	A
V	U	A	P	U	N	O	E	T
O	O	A	N	E	E	R	H	C
L	B	D	D	I	S	A	O	H
G	S	T	H	C	N	I	L	C
P	B	R	U	I	S	E	S	K
U	V	P	A	R	R	Y	C	G
N	T	H	G	I	F	O	N	E
C	I	A	E	L	L	I	N	M
H	T	L	E	B	R	S	T	E

Word wheel

Find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each must use the central letter and at least two others. Letters may be used only once. You may not use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one nine-letter word to be found. TARGET: Excellent-35. Good-29. Average-21.



Trivia corner

What is the heaviest weight record-holding Lasha Talakhadze of Georgia has lifted (in the clean and jerk category)?

a 197kg
b 227kg
c 267kg
d 307kg

Answer top right



Shocking, yet utterly familiar: this time it's Russell Brand *Rebecca Solnit, page 3*

Welcome to Wrexham – but what about the rest of us? *Simon Childs, page 4*

The hidden suffering of Palestinian children sent to jail *The long read, page 5*

G2 Daily pullout life & arts section *Inside*

The Guardian Thursday 21 September 2023

Journal

Opinion and ideas



Rishi Sunak at Cop26 in Glasgow two years ago
PHOTOGRAPH: PHIL NOBLE/REUTERS

With his party in trouble, the planet never stood a chance

Martin Kettle

Rishi Sunak's retreat from the government's net zero pledges triggers large- and small-scale conclusions alike. These range from a message about the future of the planet's place in the prime minister's priorities, at one extreme, to the anxiety it betrays about how to manage his way through his first party conference as Conservative leader, next month, at the other.

Nevertheless, Sunak's move should be seen as a short-term electoral gamble rather than a massacre of the entire net zero agenda. That does not mean that it isn't damaging to the net zero credibility established imperfectly by previous Tory prime ministers, let alone to Britain's longer-term reputation on climate action. It is all these things. If it is electorally successful, the shift could also become more fundamental and more lasting.

But Sunak's calculation, which will undoubtedly have been extensively poll- and focus group-tested by his advisers, is that public opinion is currently more concerned with the here and now than it is with 2030 or 2050. Although the various retreats – on electric cars, boilers, insulation and diet, among others – are being depicted as "pragmatic", the package embodies political rather than policy pragmatism. The timing of the shift confirms that navigating the Manchester party conference, starting on 1 October, is a genuine concern. The retreat is designed to shore up Sunak's conference credibility with the party base that elected Liz Truss, rather than him, just a year ago. This takes on special heft in a week when Truss explicitly opposed the net zero commitments.

But the pullback points beyond Manchester, too, to the pivotal importance of two rather unglamorous spots on the English electoral map. Parliamentary byelections in Mid Bedfordshire and Tamworth are due in four weeks' time, on 19 October. Both had huge Tory majorities in the last general election: more than 24,000 in Mid Beds, more than 19,000 in Tamworth. Both, though, are now serious opposition targets. Sunak's green retreat should be seen as an 11th-hour punt to save these two seats for the Tories.

The case for a throw of the dice before the byelections is seductive. The Tories are generally tired out, washed up and fatalistic. They have lost a succession of earlier byelections in seats that had once seemed as safe as Mid Beds and Tamworth. They remain well adrift

2

With his party in trouble, the planet never stood a chance

Martin Kettle

← Continued from front

of Labour in the national polls. And the two former MPs in the byelection seats, Nadine Dorries and Chris Pincher, both quit amid controversy. The Tories need to attract attention with something new.

There are no prizes for guessing what. The one shaft of electoral sunlight this year for the Tories was the victory in the Uxbridge and South Ruislip byelection. That win owed everything to a campaign focused on London's tax on high-emission vehicles. The result did more than save one Tory seat. It energised the Tory right's rumbling long-term opposition to the government's net zero targets.

At this point, it is worth remembering why Sunak is the Tory party leader at all. It's not because he won an election. He didn't. It's not because he has a radical policy agenda. He hasn't. Nor because he is a brilliant leader. Nor because he is hugely popular in the party. It is simply because, following the ruptures and implosions of the Johnson and Truss governments, Sunak was seen, rightly, as the Tories' least bad option for damage limitation. He's the guy who might just manage to land the stricken Tory plane on the water's surface, rather than nosedive it into the depths.

Sunak's retreat is designed, more than anything else, to do an Uxbridge in Mid Beds and in Tamworth. Even in the byelection context, however, this is still what American football coaches call a Hail Mary: a last-minute hurl of the ball by a trailing team that just might snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. It is a big risk. If the Tory party's net zero supporters get their act together, they could hurt Sunak's reputation a lot, not least with young voters. And if Labour sweeps home in Mid Beds and in Tamworth, he will be damaged even more.

But suppose instead that Sunak wins the byelections, what then? That's the gamble he has now taken. Expect the green retreat to be front and centre of everything the party brings to those two campaigns. If the Conservatives hold on, especially if they hold on in both contests, Sunak's achievement will be seen by his party as the most brilliant retreat overseen by a Tory prime minister since Churchill at Dunkirk. He will be the hero of the hour.

The retreat will also instantly become the template for British electoral politics in 2024. The Conservatives will undoubtedly conclude that they have a sniff of ousting Labour's Sadiq Khan in the London mayoral contest next year. They may even be right, in spite of the lacklustre Tory candidate, Susan Hall. Tory hopes would certainly increase if Jeremy Corbyn is tempted to run as an independent, splitting the Labour vote.

But the main lesson would be for the general election. If Sunak succeeds in selling his green retreat both to his party and to Tory voters and then starts to win more elections in the aftermath, then he is not going to stop there. The repositioning would be likely to continue, shifting the British Tories increasingly decisively away from the environmentally consensual party of the David Cameron era into a more sceptical party like the Australian Liberals.

There would be no shortage of voices on the right urging him on. Earlier this month, the pollster and academic Matthew Goodwin argued that only 7% of 2019 Conservative voters want their party to prioritise net zero if it increases their bills, against 72% who want to prioritise cost of living reductions. Goodwin dubs this "the next big populist revolt". Plenty of backbenchers agree. So do some cabinet ministers.

Sunak is not a strong enough leader to resist or control this. Earlier this month the government apparently promised the BMW car manufacturer that its electric car plant investment at Cowley, Oxford, would not be subverted by any retreat from the 2030 phasing-out of petrol-driven vehicles. Only a few days later, Sunak is doing precisely that. We are a long way from Sunak as the safe pair of hands or as the leader who understands business. Indeed, when Boris Johnson once said "Fuck business", it now seems he spoke for Sunak, too.

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'Comment is free... but facts are sacred' CP Scott

Net zero

Diluting climate goals is bad economics dictated by cynical, divisive politics

It takes a special kind of cynicism to assert that long-term planning must have primacy over short-term expediency while defending a policy choice that does the exact opposite. Rishi Sunak's decision to postpone deadlines for the transition to low-carbon technology is the very definition of tactical partisanship trumping strategic statecraft. That the prime minister sought to present it otherwise in a televised address to the nation yesterday shows contempt for anyone who understands the urgency of the climate crisis.

The prime minister veils his ploy in economic terms. The claim is that measures designed to accelerate the switch to low-carbon technology – a ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030, for example, and a deadline for phasing out the installation of new gas boilers by 2035 – heap the cost of transition on consumers. Downing Street insists the commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 stands, but will be reached by "more proportionate" means.

The electoral calculation is that voters can be spooked by the retail price of electric vehicles and low-carbon heating solutions. A campaign can then be fought on the basis that Labour represents eco-fanatics who want to force drivers off the roads, while Tories represent hardworking folk in ordinary cars. The belief that this can work is derived, in part, from the Uxbridge byelection in July, when the plans of London's Labour mayor for new charges on heavily polluting vehicles were weaponised in a campaign that kept the seat in Conservative hands.

There are also examples across Europe of radical rightwing parties mining a backlash against environmental regulation for electoral gain. In the US, hostility to low-carbon measures and outright denial of climate science, suffused with paranoid conspiracy theories, are embedded in the Republican mainstream. Those trends, amplified by funding and lobbying from fossil-fuel industries, have some purchase on British Conservatism but have not thus far dictated the direction of policy.

Mr Sunak's dilution of net zero goals is less extreme but still insidious. In his speech, the prime minister affected continuity with climate change consensus while digging trenches for a new culture war front. His tone was moderate; his agenda was reactionary, divisive and dishonest.

As for the prime minister's economic argument, it is flimsy. The function of ambitious deadlines is to accelerate a transition, creating the market conditions that will supply new technology and drive prices down. That works when there is a stable regulatory climate and confidence that the rules won't suddenly change, which is why car manufacturers, energy companies and providers of green tech are angry.

There is an economic cost of inaction alongside the moral shame of flinching from the climate challenge. Signalling that Britain is a capricious jurisdiction directs investment elsewhere. Countries that move faster in the green transition will sell their expertise to the laggards. Britain does not want to fall behind in that race.

The content and manner of the prime minister's actions indicate a retreat from any ambition to govern seriously, competently and in the spirit of responsible long-term decision-making to which he preposterously lays claim. It is true that Britain needs a government guided by that ethos. Mr Sunak has made it clear that it can't happen as long as he is in charge.

Caucasus

Stopping the bombing in Nagorno-Karabakh isn't enough to end the crisis

Seven thousand people were killed in just six weeks in the brutal war in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh three years ago. So when Azerbaijan launched a new military offensive on Tuesday, many feared the worst. About 100 people were reportedly killed in the first few hours.

Within a day, a ceasefire was announced. The agreement includes the disbanding of the local Armenian government's military, in what seems to be a capitulation to Azerbaijan, which had described its offensive as an "anti-terrorist operation". Talks are due to take place today. But if the ceasefire holds, the future of desperate residents remains in doubt. Baku has demanded the dissolution of the local government in Nagorno-Karabakh and has said it plans to "reintegrate" the Armenian population. Regional officials have accused Baku of preparing a campaign of ethnic cleansing.

Longstanding tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan reignited after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the region – which lies within Azerbaijan's territory, but has a mostly Armenian population – declared independence. Since then it has run itself with Armenia's support. But in 2020, emboldened by backing from Turkey, Azerbaijan launched an offensive and regained much of the land it had lost in the 1990s. Russian peacekeepers moved in to guard the Lachin corridor, the one road still linking Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

Yet since December, Nagorno-Karabakh has been in the grip of a humanitarian crisis due to a blockade of the corridor, implemented by activists with Baku's support. Residents describe it as an attempt to starve them into submission, forcing them to leave as supplies of food and medicine were exhausted. Luis Moreno Ocampo, the former chief prosecutor of the international criminal court, suggested it amounted to genocide through the "secret weapon" of starvation. Fears of another conflict grew when Baku recently began massing troops along the border with Armenia and around Nagorno-Karabakh. Foreign mediators stepped up their efforts to reach a peace agreement. Then came Tuesday's bombings.

Russia brokered the deal to end 2020's fighting and has played a key role since the 1990s, co-chairing the Minsk group with France and the US. That cooperation is out of the window, and this time Moscow has been strikingly absent from the crisis, despite requests for help from Armenia, a long-term treaty ally. Its peacekeepers stood aside. Waging war in Ukraine is its priority, limiting its capacity and attention to deal with other matters. But many suspect that Moscow's inaction is also payback for Armenia "flirting" with Nato, including holding joint military drills with the US. It is irked by the prime minister, Nikol Pashinyan, who recently complained that Russia has not protected it from Azerbaijan's aggression, and it will enjoy the domestic discontent he now faces.

A frozen regional conflict has heated up again thanks to shifting international relations. Multiple foreign players have an interest in the region, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues to reverberate and to reshape the world. The European Union's hunt for alternative energy supplies has led it to court Ilham Aliyev, the president of Azerbaijan, but also gives it potential leverage. This will be necessary. Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh must be safeguarded now.

Shocking, yet utterly familiar: this time it's Russell Brand

Rebecca Solnit



There's nothing new but the details in what the Times and Channel 4 journalists uncovered about Russell Brand. We've been through this so many times, the story finally uncovered of a rich or powerful or celebrated man being accused of sexual abuse for years or decades. Brand says all of his relationships were absolutely always consensual.

An utterly familiar element is all the people claiming there's something suspicious about victims not reporting "until now", a complaint always launched with strategic obliviousness to how often women reporting sexual harassment, rape or domestic violence set themselves up for more abuse. "Why didn't they report?" say people who are exactly why they don't report: because of people like them looking to attack and discredit victims when they do. And because the police are often incompetent, biased, corrupt or abusers themselves. In London, Sarah Everard was abducted while walking home one night in March 2021, by a Metropolitan police officer looking for any woman convenient to rape and murder.

Those few rape cases that make it to court often result in exposure, danger, shaming and months to years of torment in the legal system for victims. A tiny percentage of these cases result in convictions, and that too has been so widely discussed in recent years that those who don't acknowledge it have likewise chosen wilful ignorance. A lot of men who have been found guilty of sexual abuse or domestic violence, the rapper Chris Brown among them, are still getting lucrative contracts to perform and promote products. So it's not hard to understand why Brand's alleged victims didn't report earlier.

But there is a lot of evidence that insiders in the fields in which Brand worked knew about the allegations and that women warned each other against him, and that too is an old story we've heard again and again. One of the most chilling parts of the Times account is of the 16-year-old who says she got sexually involved with Brand and says he eventually sexually assaulted and abused her; she also reportedly said on one occasion that the taxi driver knew the address she was going to and begged her not to go in.

The Brand story surfaced at the same time as another celebrity rape story, or rather the story of how Ashton Kutcher wrote a letter to a judge praising his fellow TV star Danny Masterson after he'd been convicted of raping two women. Masterson got away with rape for two decades before the consequences came, though one of the victims reported the assault in 2004, she says in her victim statement.

More and more I see rape as an act demonstrating the rapist's power and the victim's powerlessness to stop, to exert jurisdiction over her own body, to have her words, including "no", mean something. That powerlessness continues afterwards, when she's disbelieved or threatened or forced into an NDA.

"I never saw my friend be anything other than the guy I have described," Kutcher declared, and lots of people on social media repeated Kutcher's delusion, that the person they see is the whole person and there are no other sides or secrets. One of the most obvious things in the world is that abusers are usually strategic: wife-beaters generally don't beat their wives in front of people who'd stop them or send them to jail; rapists mostly work at both hiding their crimes and picking victims they think they can get away with raping. You have to be an idiot not to know that too many people treat the powerless one way and the powerful another.

"The character statement I submitted is yet another painful instance of questioning victims," Kutcher wrote in a letter resigning from the board of a non-profit addressing child trafficking. "This is precisely what we have all worked to reverse over the last decade," he continued, except that on this occasion he was apparently working to perpetuate it instead. So were a lot of others. They still are.



ILLUSTRATION: SÉBASTIEN THIBAULT

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Rebecca Solnit *is a Guardian US columnist and the author of Men Explain Things to Me and Orwell's Roses*

Debate age of consent all you want – we know what's creepy

Emma Brockes



There is nothing like the shock registered by young children today when apprised of banished norms of the recent past – smoking on planes, women needing a man to co-sign for a credit card – to remind us how quickly universal assumptions can change. Among the list of gross things that, at present, still induce widespread shrugs are relationships between adult men and teenage girls. You wonder what it would take to make that taboo, too.

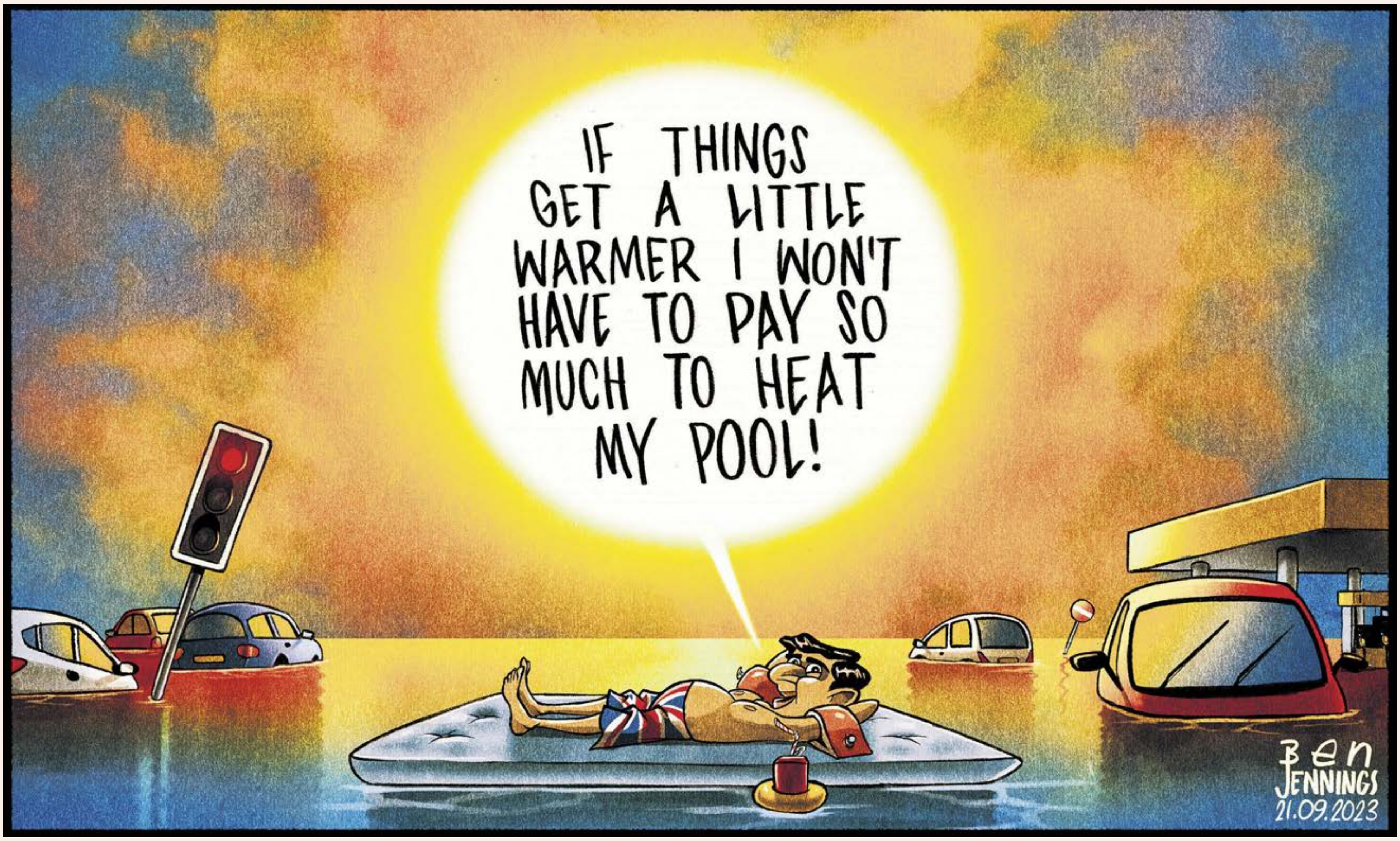
Calls for new laws around the age of consent in the UK, which is set at 16, came this week in the wake of the Russell Brand revelations, and were made in the first instance by one of his alleged victims, known as "Alice", who alleges she was sexually assaulted by Brand when she was 16 and he was in his 30s, in an otherwise largely consensual relationship. She suggested revisiting the consent laws to recognise that men "dating" girls in their teens entails a power imbalance that she considers to be abusive.

She suggested "staggered ages of consent", in which "individuals between the ages of 16 and 18 can have relations with people within that same age bracket" but not older. Jayne Butler, the CEO of Rape Crisis England and Wales, told the Guardian that one way of doing this might be to look at extending current laws banning relationships between, for example, adult teachers and their teenage students, which remain in place even when the teenager is over 16.

It seems to me unlikely that these suggestions are anywhere close to being taken seriously at the level of the law. But raising them in public is helpful in denormalising a widely held assumption that old and middle-aged men chasing schoolgirls for sex is OK.

There are so many instances of this kind of thing happening. To wit, photos of Bill Wyman (who dated Mandy Smith when she was a teenager and he was in his 40s) inevitably circulated this week, as did those of R Kelly (who married Aaliyah when she was 15 and he was 27). A lawsuit for sexual assault of a minor was brought against Steven Tyler of Aerosmith this year, who in his memoir described being in his late 20s with a girlfriend in her mid-teens whose "parents fell in love with me, signed a paper over for me to have custody, so I wouldn't get arrested if I took her out of state. I took her on tour." Tyler denies the allegations.

Given what we know about grooming, what remains depressing about the adult man/teenage girl dynamic is how resistant it is to the view that it's creepy at all. When stories such as Brand's blow up, a lot of women I know flip the sexes and try to imagine pursuing a relationship with a 16-year-old boy, responding in the first instance, inevitably, with hysterical laughter, because, eeew! And in the second – while glancing in the direction of Brand and men like him, irrespective of whether their behaviour is perfectly legal – with "what the hell is wrong with you?"



Welcome to Wrexham - but what about us?

Simon Childs



In future generations, bright-eyed, football-mad children on their first visit to the Racecourse Ground in north Wales will ask: "Why are we Wrexham fans, Mum?" And they'll be told: "Your father was a Wrexham fan, and your father's father, and your father's father's father ... well, your father's father's father watched Welcome to Wrexham with Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney on Disney+."

As a fan of a club playing in the same league as Wrexham, the unfolding hype has been an uneasy watch. There's nothing necessarily wrong with random people from around the world deciding to support Wrexham, but you do have to wonder if some of them are a bit gullible if they're choosing their team after watching a celebrity-fronted docu-commercial.

The second series of the show starts with a piece to camera in which Reynolds and McElhenney pretend to be lost for words as they deliver news that King Charles is coming to the north Welsh town, and will pay the club a visit. The players and fans seem baffled at the circus of money and power that has descended on them. "You've got two Hollywood actors, you've got the royal family in Wrexham. How do you even put them together? I've no idea," says a Wrexham striker, Ollie Palmer.

The answer to how this all came together has to do with two celebrities attaching themselves to the rapidly accelerating global commodification of football. The apparent authenticity of football culture in its native home is now a highly marketable product. It's red-carpet glamour meets terrace culture. This particular synthesis has been successful in creating bingeable content for the highly competitive streaming market.

But is Welcome to Wrexham really about football? It seems to be as much about the celebrity of Reynolds and McElhenney, who are executive producers of the show. There are self-deprecating jokes about midlife crisis; there's a cutesy subplot where McElhenney feels left out as Reynolds goes to a game without him; there's an entire episode devoted to their first visit to Wales.

At times, the documentary feels like a corporate video; at other times, it's just very Hollywood. "I can't believe this is my life," says McElhenney at one point, standing on the pitch he owns, marvelling at a situation that he paid to contrive.

This is where we are now. As the money involved in football becomes ever more absurd, clubs are finding it harder and harder to simply exist, let alone compete. Some get lucky and become the subjects of cringey documentaries or multibillion-pound sportswashing operations for autocratic petro-dictatorships, while others fight for their lives or get stripped for their assets.

My own club has been on the dirty end of this particular stick. In what Disney+ subscribers call "series one", and what real, authentic football fans like me know as the 2021-22 season, Wrexham bought the aforementioned Palmer from AFC Wimbledon. Palmer went on to become pivotal in the Welsh side's improved late-season form, but the move deprived cash-strapped Wimbledon of our only recognised striker and, ultimately, formed part of the story of our relegation from League One.

The Hollywood duo's money had gazumped Wimbledon, a club I part own, as I have one share, for which I paid £25. This fan-owned model was what Wrexham used to have too, before it got pumped full of Hollywood cash, like a celebrity's behind full of filler.

Reynolds and McElhenney clearly really care about the club and the community, and it would be churlish to deny that their purchase of Wrexham is a lesser evil. Imagine, for instance, a docu-series called Saudi Mags, where Mohammed bin Salman takes a break from ordering the murder of dissident journalists to go to Newcastle and eat a stottie with Peter Beardsley in Granger Market. And yet that seems like a low bar.

Clearly a savvy businessman, Reynolds tells us: "I'll lie awake at night for hours just thinking about how we can better centre this club on the world stage." That this happens during a scene in which he films an advert for an online password management brand at the Racecourse, using Wrexham players as actors, suggests he may not be thinking of the kind of global acclaim most fans dream of that comes with great football.

The Disneyfication of football is no fairytale. It's part of a wider shift that will have consequences that are hard to predict but seem unlikely to be good. In other words, game's gone.

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Simon Childs *is a freelance writer*

A Palestinian child and Israeli tanks in Gaza in 2003 REUTERS/AHMED JADALLAH



'A hidden universe of suffering': the Palestinian children sent to jail

One night in 2005, Israeli soldiers came for Huda Dahbour's teenage son. He was gone for a year and a half. The damage done to their family – and to so many others like them – was incalculable

By *Nathan Thrall*

Huda Dahbour was 35 years old when she moved with her husband and three children to the West Bank in September 1995. It was the second anniversary of the Oslo accords, which established pockets of Palestinian self-government in the occupied territories. Jerusalem was still relatively open when they arrived in East Sawahre, a neighbourhood just outside the areas of Jerusalem that Israel had annexed in 1967. Huda was able to send her children to school within the city. They were under the age of 12, and Israel allowed them to enter without a special blue ID. But over time the restrictions grew, and from one day to the next Jerusalem was closed off to Palestinians by checkpoints, roadblocks and a tightening of the ever-more elaborate permit regime. On one occasion, the school bus was blocked from bringing the students home to Sawahre. Huda and half the parents of the neighbourhood spent the afternoon searching for their children, who finally showed up at sunset, after walking for several hours. Huda immediately took them out of their Jerusalem schools.

It was a fateful decision. Until then, her eldest son, Hadi, had lived up to the meaning of his name – "calm". He was a quiet boy who rarely got into trouble. That changed when he had to start a new school, this one in Abu Dis, which was home to al-Quds University and the site of frequent clashes between local youth and Israeli soldiers. During the second intifada, the bloody 2000-2005 Palestinian uprising against the occupation, Israel cut off Abu Dis from Jerusalem by erecting an 8 metre-tall concrete wall, the "separation barrier". It was a disaster for Abu Dis, whose businesses relied heavily on customers from the city. Shops closed, land values dropped by more than half, rental prices by nearly a third and those who could afford to moved away.

Israeli troops were stationed outside Hadi's school practically every day. To Huda, their presence seemed designed to provoke the students so they could then arrest as many of them as possible. The soldiers would stop them on their way out of classes, line them up against the wall, frisk them and sometimes beat them, too.

In her work as a doctor with UNRWA, the UN relief and works agency for Palestinian refugees, Huda saw things that made her afraid for her sons. She had witnessed a soldier shoot a boy who threw a stone at a tank. The soldiers stopped her from going to help him as he fell to the ground. At home in Sawahre, listening to the nightly news of West Bank killings and closures, she had trouble sleeping. She knew Hadi was out throwing stones.

The stress began to show in her body. It started with headaches that became severe. Then at work one day she had the sensation of cold liquid inside her head. She had double vision and difficulty walking. When she got home, she took a nap and woke up 24 hours later. Huda understood that she had been in a coma, a sign that she might have a cerebral haemorrhage.

She needed an operation, but the Palestinian hospitals in the West Bank and East Jerusalem weren't equipped to perform it. She couldn't afford treatment in Israel. Finally, she obtained a letter from the Palestinian Authority – from Yasser Arafat himself – promising to cover 90% of the 50,000 shekels (then around £6,000) in costs, and brought it to Hadassah hospital in Jerusalem.

The surgery was a success, but the stress that had possibly caused the haemorrhage only intensified. One Sunday in May 2004, when Hadi was 15, he and his friends were shot at by Israeli border police. Eyewitnesses told the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem and the AFP news agency that the boys had not taken part in any hostilities. Hadi told his mother they had been minding their own business, drinking Cokes, when the soldiers started to fire at them. One of the bullets hit Hadi's friend, who was sitting right beside him. The boy was killed immediately.

After that, Hadi confronted the soldiers with new determination. Huda would see him and his friends in the street, recognising him despite the black-and-white kaffiyeh covering his face. She kept her distance, though, not wanting the soldiers to see that she was his mother so that they would find out where he lived, and then come to their home to arrest him at night. But less than a year after Hadi's friend was shot, Israeli jeeps and armoured vehicles surrounded Huda's home at 1.30am. Troops approached from all sides and banged loudly on the door. Huda knew why they had come.

Huda wanted to delay the inevitable, to have a few more seconds with her boy, so she ignored the banging, opening the door only when the soldiers began kicking at it. They had their weapons trained on her as she quietly asked what they wanted, tears running down her face.

"We want Hadi," one of the soldiers said. Huda demanded to know the accusation. "Your son knows," she was told.

"I'm his mother. I want to know," she said. They ignored her.

Hadi's younger brother Ahmad, who was 13, came with her as she led the way to Hadi's room. Ahmad told his mother not to cry; it would only make it harder for Hadi. Huda tried to contain her fear, knowing that any attempt to stop the soldiers from taking Hadi could put his life in danger. She imagined them killing him there in front of her, saying that it was in self-defence.

Huda wanted to hug her son, but she knew if she touched him she would fall apart. She asked the soldiers to let him take a winter coat. It was still cold. Where would she be able to find him, she wanted to know. She was told to come see him in the morning in the nearby settlement of Ma'ale Adumim. She watched them put zip ties around his wrists, pushing him out the door and through the garden toward one of the jeeps. It felt as if her heart had left with him.

Opposite: Palestinian children play by the separation wall near Bethlehem in 2004

AP PHOTO/MUHAMMED MUHEISEN

Huda tried to contain her fear, knowing that any attempt to stop the soldiers from taking Hadi could put his life in danger



Below: Hadi (third from right) and Huda (right) with other family members

COURTESY OF THE FAMILY

For two weeks, Huda drove from one detention facility to another in search of Hadi, from Ma'ale Adumim to Ofer prison to the Russian Compound in Jerusalem to the Gush Etzion settlement bloc, using her UNWRA work permit to pass checkpoints and enter settlements barred to most Palestinians. But she never saw Hadi, and was unable to learn where he was being held. She couldn't eat, couldn't sleep, couldn't laugh, couldn't smile. She couldn't bring herself to prepare any of the dishes that Hadi liked. She didn't want to leave her house or go anywhere she might be forced to carry on a normal conversation, as if she weren't in the deepest grief, as if Hadi were not gone.

Huda retained a Palestinian lawyer, who charged $3,000, but she told me that Ismail, her husband, refused to pay. He blamed Hadi and Huda for the arrest. Why had Hadi been out throwing stones and not at school? Why hadn't she stopped him?

This was more than Huda could bear.

Huda had met Ismail in Tunis, soon after she finished medical school at Damascus University. Her father had suggested that she join the Red Crescent in Tunisia, where her uncle, who was a senior official in the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), would be able to look after her. The PLO's headquarters were in Tunis at the time, after the organisation had been forced out of Lebanon in 1982.

Ismail had come to her clinic with tonsillitis while on a visit from Moscow, where he was completing his doctorate in international relations. He was also the head of the Palestinian student union there, a fast track to national political leadership, and was in Tunis for a meeting of student union activists from around the world. Five years older than Huda, Ismail looked a bit like a hero in an action movie, with a mane of shaggy, sandy brown hair and a thick moustache.

Huda had three conditions for any potential mate: he had to be educated, a member of the Fatah faction of the PLO – which to her meant a person of moderation, like her father – and, unlike most of the men she knew, not intimidated by a successful, intelligent woman. In concrete terms, that involved supporting her plan to go back to medical school to become a specialist. Ismail met all three. They were engaged five days after they met, and then Ismail returned to Moscow. Huda joined him the following year, living in the university dorms. She loved Moscow and Russian culture, and was impressed with how literate and well educated the people were.

After learning Russian, she began studying paediatrics, but soon got pregnant, and it changed her in ways she hadn't expected. She could no longer bear the sight and sound of children in pain. Huda was ready to switch fields when Ismail learned that Arafat had appointed him to a diplomatic posting in Bucharest. She talked to one of her teachers about staying alone in Moscow to complete her training. The teacher advised against it: husband and wife are like a needle and thread, she said – where the needle goes, the thread must follow.

In Bucharest, Huda had to start again, learning Romanian and applying to a new medical school. She took it as an opportunity to change her speciality to endocrinology. She enjoyed the logic and critical reasoning that the discipline entailed and, more practically, thought there would be no emergency work, so that after her child was born she would not be called away at night.

They named their baby daughter Hiba, "gift". The birth put a strain on the marriage. Hiba was difficult, crying all the time, and Huda said she received little support or sympathy from Ismail. She was single-handedly nursing and taking care of Hiba, studying endocrinology, serving food to poor Palestinian students in Romania, and hosting dinner parties for diplomats, visiting Palestinians and Romanian officials.

A few months after Hiba's birth, Huda became



pregnant again. By the end of her third trimester, she was worn out from a year of soothing Hiba's relentless crying, so she chose an aspirational name for the second baby - Hadi, "calm". She travelled to Syria to give birth, where she had the support of family. Back at home, she recalled, Ismail maintained that the stress was of her own making: she was the one who chose to stay in medical school while raising two young children who were just a year apart. If she wanted to pursue her speciality, he had no objection. But he would not be helping with cooking, childcare or hosting; she was free to study when all of that was done.

Somehow she managed, learning Romanian, finishing her training, raising her children, hosting dinners and having a third child in 1991. Though exhausted and unhappy in her marriage, she appeared to be fortunate and content: a successful doctor with a distinguished husband and three young children.

After Israel and the PLO signed the 1993 Oslo accords, thousands of exiled PLO cadres were able to return to the new autonomous areas. Though Huda wasn't eligible to go on her own, not having worked for the PLO, she could do so with Ismail. But he didn't want to leave Bucharest, an elegant riverside capital lined with Beaux-Arts buildings, dubbed the Paris of the east. He enjoyed the life of a diplomat. Huda insisted on leaving, however. She knew how Israel operated, she said: if they didn't go now, they would not be allowed to enter Palestine later. Privately, she had another reason for wanting to go. She dreamed of having a child born on Palestinian soil. This was her chance to replant a seed in the land from which her family had been uprooted a half century earlier.

They arrived in September 1995. A year later, Israel halted entry of PLO personnel. Huda gave birth to their fourth child, naming the girl Lujain, which meant "silver" and came from the opening line of one of her favourite songs by Fairuz, the iconic Lebanese singer. It was the peak of what was called the peace process. Prime minister Yitzhak Rabin had just concluded the second Oslo accord, known as Oslo II, which delineated all the islands of limited Palestinian autonomy in the occupied territories. Huda felt it was meaningless.

Rabin was emphatic that there would be no Palestinian state, no capital in Jerusalem, more settlements annexed to Jerusalem, more settlement blocs in the West Bank and that Israel would never withdraw behind the boundaries it had prior to the 1967 war, even though they comprised a full 78% of historic Palestine. Somewhere within the West Bank and Gaza - or the part of it that Israel hadn't settled, annexed or set aside for permanent military control - the Palestinians would be granted "less than a state", as Rabin called it. But even these crumbs were too much for some Israelis: Rabin was assassinated by an Orthodox Jewish nationalist a little over a month after Huda and Ismail and their children crossed into the West Bank. Hearing the news at his home in Gaza, Arafat wept.

The Palestinians who came to the occupied territories under the terms of the Oslo agreement were known as returnees. Huda thought the label was silly. She was a refugee in Syria, an expatriate when briefly living with her parents in the Gulf, an immigrant in Romania and now a returnee. She was on Palestinian land, but to what had she returned? Not to anywhere she or her father or uncle or grandmother knew. Huda's husband was not allowed to return to his family's home in Jabal Mukaber, because it was within annexed Jerusalem. He and Huda moved instead to part of neighbouring Sawahre, just outside the municipal boundary. Sawahre and Jabal Mukaber had once been a single village but, after Oslo, Palestinians from eastern Sawahre needed permits to visit their relatives in Jabal Mukaber, and even to bury their dead in the cemetery. Later the separation wall ran through the middle of Sawahre.

Huda felt out of place there. The villagers seemed rough-mannered to her, as though out of another time. Their dialect was hard for



US president Bill Clinton (centre) with PLO leader Yasser Arafat (right) and Israeli prime minister Yitzahk Rabin (left) after signing the Oslo accords in 1993
DAVID AKE/ AFP VIA GETTY

her to understand and she was embarrassed not to comprehend the basic speech of fellow Palestinians. Her neighbours struck her as hardened, too. They were mountain people, nothing like the cosmopolitan city-dwellers of the stories she had heard from her grandmother, who had been forced to flee the coastal town of Haifa in 1948. Even Haifa itself, when she was finally able to visit, bore no resemblance to her grandmother's descriptions.

As a returnee, Huda felt a growing distance from the society around her. The returnees who had come with Arafat filled the senior positions in the new authority, the *sulta*, at the expense of the local Palestinians who had led the first intifada. It was only due to the sacrifice of the local population, the "insiders", that the outsiders were able to return. But the lives of the insiders only got worse after Oslo. On top of greater restrictions on movement, employment plummeted as Israel replaced Palestinian labourers with foreign workers, recruited mostly from Asia. The year after Huda arrived, almost one in three Palestinians was out of work. Nearly every returnee, by contrast, had a job in Arafat's expanding patronage network.

Ordinary people came to resent the returnees, holding them responsible for the constrictions of Oslo, the collaboration of the Palestinian security services with Israel, and the corruption of the sulta. The figures close to Arafat pocketed tens of millions of dollars of public money, much of it funnelled through a Tel Aviv bank account, and some even profited from the building of settlements. Arafat tried to make light of the matter. He once told his cabinet he had just received a call from his wife reporting a thief in the house; he assured her it was impossible because all the thieves were sitting right there with him.

Joking aside, Arafat knew he was threatened by the widespread unhappiness with Oslo - and with the authoritarian regime it had created. When 20 prominent figures signed a petition against the sulta's "corruption, deceit and despotism", more than half of them were detained, interrogated or placed under house arrest. Others were beaten or shot in the legs.

Huda was most troubled by the sulta's security cooperation with Israel. Ismail worked in the Interior Ministry, which, relying on a wide network of informants, oversaw the surveillance and arrest of Palestinians who continued to resist Israel's occupation. Huda was horrified by how many Palestinians were betraying one another. Even among her own staff at the UNRWA clinic, there were informants who reported on their co-workers, which led to visits and interrogation by Israeli intelligence. Huda refused to change her behaviour or censor herself, however, remaining defiantly political at work. For her, the job at UNRWA was never only humanitarian. It was always nationalist, too. Treating refugees meant she was doing something for her people.

> **The lives of local people got worse after the Oslo accords. Restrictions on movement got tighter and unemployment rose**

Hadi's arrest brought the marriage to breaking point. If Ismail refused to pay for a lawyer, Huda felt, he was no longer willing to act as a father, and she no longer wanted him in her life. She asked for a divorce. If you refuse to grant it, she said, I will tell everyone that you're not a nationalist and won't support your son. Huda saw that she had frightened him and Ismail agreed to the divorce.

After two weeks, the lawyer called to say that Hadi was being held at a detention centre in Gush Etzion, south of Bethlehem, and would soon have a hearing at the military court at the Ofer prison, between Jerusalem and Ramallah. He was lucky to get a hearing so early, she was told. Other parents waited for three, four and five months before their children were brought to trial and they could see them.

Huda was instructed to come early for a thorough security check. After waiting for several hours, she entered a cramped courtroom. Only the military judge, the prosecutor, Hadi, his lawyer, a translator and a few soldiers and security officers were present. The chances of Hadi being released were nonexistent; the military court's conviction rate was 99.7%. For children charged with throwing stones, the rate was even higher: of the 835 children accused in the six years following Hadi's arrest, 834 were convicted, nearly all of whom served time in jail. Hundreds of them were between 12 and 15 years old.

Just before the hearing began, Huda learned that Hadi had confessed to throwing stones and writing anti-occupation graffiti. She was told that it was forbidden to speak to Hadi or attempt to touch him - the judge would throw her out if she tried. When Hadi was brought into the courtroom, he was chained at the leg to another prisoner. Huda managed to stay silent, but gasped as she saw a large burn mark on his face. Now crying, Huda stood up and through the translator demanded a halt to the proceedings. She was a doctor, she said, and could see that her son had been tortured.

The Israeli military judge barked at her to be quiet and sit back down. Huda refused, insisting that Hadi lift his shirt and lower his pants so the court could see that his confession had been extracted under torture. The judge allowed it. Hadi's body was covered with bruises, as if he had been beaten with batons. Huda shouted that the soldiers who tortured him should be tried. As the judge adjourned the hearing, Huda rushed to her son, ignoring the yelling of the guards, and gave Hadi the hug she had suppressed on the night of his arrest. She imagined she could warm him with her hug, before his stay in the cold prison cell. The judge bellowed: this would be the last time she would touch her son until he was released.

Hadi's lawyer, who encouraged the family to take whatever deal was offered, brought a proposal for 19 months in jail, with a reduction to 16 months for a fee of 3,000 shekels, then around £360. The sentence was lighter than that received by some of Hadi's friends and classmates; about 20 of them, ranging in age from 12 to 16, had been arrested at the same time. A number of the students had blue IDs, unlike Hadi. This allowed them freedom of movement in Jerusalem and throughout Israel, and their sentences were roughly twice as long as the others. There was a condition attached to Hadi's deal: Huda had to drop any claims against the soldiers who had tortured him. In any case, the lawyer said, there was no chance of the soldiers being prosecuted. No one would testify against them. Hadi took the deal.

He was transferred to a remote tent prison in the Naqab desert, where Huda visited him as often as she could. Whatever she brought for Hadi, she would bring for the other inmates as well. They were teenage boys, many of them quite poor. On her UNRWA salary, she could afford to give them gifts that their parents could not. She brought books, hoping they would help keep up the boys' spirits. Hadi's friends would tell her the names of the girls they loved, and she came back with grains of rice that had been inscribed with the girls' initials. On one holiday, she arrived with a tapestry of a blue sky and stars for the roof of their tent.

Huda spent nearly 24 hours travelling for each 40-minute visit. The relatives would sit on one side of a glass partition, the prisoners on the other. Some inmates were not permitted visits by their wives or parents or children over 15, and others were forbidden visits altogether. The prisoners and their relatives would speak to one another through a small hole in the glass, the voices barely audible on the other side. Only young children were allowed to make physical contact. Huda would watch as mothers pushed reluctant boys and girls to embrace fathers who had become strangers. The children cried and the fathers wept, too.

Hadi's year-and-a-half in prison was the hardest stretch of time in Huda's life. It opened her eyes to a hidden universe of suffering that touched nearly every Palestinian home. A little over a year after Hadi's release, a UN report found that 700,000 Palestinians had been arrested since the occupation began, equal to roughly 40% of all the men and boys in the territories. The damage wasn't only to the affected families, each of them grieving lost years and lost childhoods. It was to the entire society, to every mother, father and grandparent, all of whom knew or would come to learn that they were powerless to protect their children. ●

Nathan Thrall *is an American writer based in Jerusalem*

This is an edited extract from A Day in the Life of Abed Salama: A Palestine Story, published by Allen Lane on 3 October and available at guardianbookshop.com

Letters

Established 1906

Country diary

St Dominic, Tamar Valley

Harvest in this predominantly pastoral area entails a frenetic succession of grass cutting, spreading to wilt, rowing-up, baling, and wrapping in plastic as silage or haylage. The onset of hot dry weather, after weeks of rainy gloom, enables second cuts and cheers farmers who now anticipate sufficient winter fodder for their animals.

The few crops of cereals have not thrived – moulds flourished in the damp summer, spoiling grain, reducing yields and providing sparse straw. To avoid complete loss, a field near home was "cut whole" one night in late August, carted back to base and packed into the silage clamp.

Fields on Viverdon Down, the highest land in this riverside parish, used to be regularly cultivated with cereals, providing grain for cattle feed and straw for bedding; today's high cost of fertiliser and sprays now make it more economical to buy in straw from specialist growers upcountry.

Today, more of those higher fields are sown with nitrogenous clover that increases the yield of grasses for hay and silage. Pastures vacated by grazing sheep and cattle are regularly topped to allow cuttings to be drawn back into the ground, improving fertility and soil structure; no artificial fertiliser, just home-produced farmyard manure.

Fodder beet is grown by some, but the leafy, bulked-up roots have to be mechanically dug in late autumn and winter months when the ground is usually wet and muddy.

This year an expanse of maize curves towards the tidal river at Halton Quay. Set above Hornifast Marsh and opposite the woods of Mount Ararat, the thick crop "grows high as an elephant's eye", each leafy stem carrying at least two cobs. Planted in mid-May, the deep-rooted plants continue to grow in September's hazy warmth; it will be cut and chopped next month to provide some 200 tons of protein-rich winter feed for the farmer's pedigree suckler herd of South Devon cattle.

Wandering poults, bought in as chicks and reared for nearby Pentillie's pheasant shoots, seem content for now to avoid this dense crop, and return regularly to familiar fenced feeding runs, protected by sunflowers and other seeding plants.

Virginia Spiers

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Women should be the focus of Brand scandal

I imagine reading the current coverage of the allegations against Russell Brand is difficult for those who have had similar experiences. It certainly is for me. Reading Marina Hyde's article (This time, let's treat Brand's victims with greater respect, 20 September) made it clearer to me why something so unconnected with you can feel so personal.

It is the nature of sexual violence that it is both personal and un-personal at the same time. One of the most violating things that can happen to you has nothing to do with you; it's the perpetrator's choice, not yours, and it's not your fault or anything to do with who you are or what you have done. You essentially become nameless, faceless, without your own personality and history.

The coverage of sexual violence does a similar thing. Hyde's description of the aftermath of the Andrew Sachs voicemails really brings this home. Not only was Georgina Baillie never granted her own humanity, it was never even considered that she deserved any; it seems that even her own grandfather, along with many others, thought she was culpable, even though she was not involved in the call and never consented to that information being released.

This happens with women who report sexual violence against them. Their humanity is again stripped away; they are seen as, at best, a nameless, faceless group of women, at worse, deserving participants or liars. When you have been treated like you have no worth by the perpetrator, it is difficult enough to recover; when you can see that a large portion of society agrees, that feeling can come back time and time again. So, while this is undoubtedly someone else's story, it brings back memories.

Name and address supplied

● The "deep power imbalance" referred to recently by the BBC director general, Tim Davie, in the context of the behaviour of media stars such as Russell Brand, is sadly nothing new.

In 1990 I started my working life as a lowly studio floor assistant at the BBC Television Centre. While it was an exciting place to work, it was clear that deference to artists was expected at all levels. There was even an internal handbook laying out the behaviour expected of junior production staff towards the "talent". Even as an eager-to-please 23-year-old, I remember noticing how one-sided it was.

The culture inevitably led to abusive behaviour by some high-profile stars – we all knew who to avoid. It was easier to move unhappy junior staff on to other shows than for senior executives to tackle some artists' bad behaviour.

> **The culture at the BBC inevitably led to abusive behaviour by some high-profile stars – we all knew who to avoid**

One solution now could be for all media and theatre artists' contracts to include a stringent "acceptable conduct" clause, which they and their agents specifically sign up to, and for this to be accepted as industry best practice.

It's unforgivable that abuse, both sexual and bullying, still continues in media production more than 30 years on.

Hettie Hope
Woodbridge, Suffolk

● I wonder just how many more Russell Brands are out there, full of arrogance and pumped up in their sense of power because the people around them and the entertainment world have turned a blind eye or enabled their misogyny.

Angela Donnelly
Bryansford, County Down

● Thanks to Zoe Williams for her illuminating piece (Reading between the lines, 19 September) on misogynistic celebrity shows and writings of 20 years back. She asserts that this is "material we all watched, all enabled". To whom does this "we" refer? All people? All women? Women of her generation? As I remember, there existed feminists who criticised this material and refused to watch or read it. They did not lack daring so much as media power, and were often sneered at as puritanical, humourless and sex-negative.

Michele Roberts
London

● By saying "young people now have significantly more extreme misogynistic attitudes", Zoe Williams is doing exactly what she is writing about – blurring lines. It should read "many young men now have…". The word misogynistic can be applied to women, but surely it is men being referred to in this article.

Linda Karlsen
Whitstable, Kent

Bring back the dog licence – with a test

Almost all dogs are potentially dangerous, and all dogs can be a nuisance (Humans vary, but their dogs will always have a wild side, 14 September). Yet dogs can be an absolute joy to have around. The difference is not in the breed of dog but the behaviour of the owners. A responsible and knowledgable owner ensures a well-trained dog. The problem is that there is no requirement for dog owners to have any knowledge at all.

One solution would be a dog licence, issued only after passing a test to show you know how to keep a dog. This would operate in a similar way to a driving test, and dog owners would be given penalty points for poor dog behaviour, or even have their licence taken away for serious offences, such as biting.

Knowing that your licence could be taken away could help to prevent all sorts of problems, including dog attacks, noisy dogs, poo bags being left everywhere etc. It would also make for happier dogs. Being pack animals, they are happiest when they know their place, and confused and nervous when they get mixed signals.

The test and the licence should be reasonably priced so as not to exclude anyone on the grounds of cost, and existing dog owners should be given a reasonable amount of time to comply with the new rules.

I believe this approach would be welcomed by responsible dog owners, who see irresponsible owners giving everyone a bad name. Irresponsible owners may well object, but it should be remembered that they are in possession of a potentially dangerous and possibly lethal weapon.

Bernie Leadbeater
Chester

Shinty allowed us to break hockey's rules

I was surprised to read that women and girls are enjoying a "breakthrough" year in the Highland sport of shinty (Report, 16 September). I was playing "shitty shinty", as we called it, at my secondary modern in Bognor in about 1966. We were told it was Irish. "Shitty" because it was dangerous: you could wield the stick at head height, which is against the rules in more ladylike hockey.

Sue Elliott
Ealing, London

● We played shinty at my Nottingham junior school in the 1950s, and my football club, Nottingham Forest, was founded by shinty and bandy players.

Margaret Astill
Nottingham

Corrections and clarifications

● **Dr Bhawna Sirohi is a former president of oncology at the Royal Society of Medicine, not the president of oncology at the "Royal Medical Society" as an article said (GPs ignoring cancer symptoms in young people, expert warns, 9 September, p8). Some of the information included in the article related to her work in breast cancer clinics in India, rather than in the UK as suggested. And the screening ages given for breast cancer and colorectal cancer were for England, not the UK.**

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Rune with a view: a mason's lofty lecture

During recent work on the bells and tower of St Michael's church in Bishop's Stortford, a message from 1820 was rediscovered: "This tower was rebilt by parish exspence AD 1819-20 but a meen parish and gave the workman nothing to drink". It's not visible from ground level, but I hope it relieved his feelings. I wonder if the recent workmen have left a message for posterity (Letters, 19 September).

Angela Barton
Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire

● Further to Amy Fleming's "seven-year search for better bacon" (G2, 18 September), could I add that, for sauces and soups, a couple of tablespoons of strong-brewed lapsang souchong provide a convincing "smoky bacon" flavour.

Tracy Twell
Birstall, Leicestershire

● Regarding the suggestion that the end is nigh for us humans to "own" and keep pets (Letters, 20 September), my cat is happy to employ me. My dog had no problem with a sentient being (her) owning another sentient being (me).

Peter Declan O'Halloran
County Cavan, Ireland

● Well, how refreshing. A photograph of a man and a woman, and it's the man's clothes that are commented on (Shoe watch: Cameron and Sunak tripped up. Can Starmer do better?, 16 September). Still not sure why though, but hey ho.

Rory Murphy
London

● Keir Starmer must surely be doing something right (Starmer criticised by both left and right over plan to end small boats crisis, 15 September).

Prof John Galloway
Croxley Green, Hertfordshire



Roger Whittaker

Popular folk singer and whistler best known for his 1969 hit Durham Town (the Leavin')

Although there was never any such phenomenon as Whittakermania, Roger Whittaker, who has died aged 87, built a huge international following in a career that spanned six decades. As the Boston Globe noted of his stage performances: "No one gets high. No one gets hysterical with excitement. And yet Roger Whittaker is one of the most popular entertainers in the world."

Whittaker's smooth baritone voice and songs of love, loss and yearning endeared him to audiences worldwide. His best known songs, where his voice was invariably accompanied by keening strings, included 1969's Durham Town (the Leavin'), I Don't Believe in If Anymore (1970), which reached No 8 in the UK, The Last Farewell (1971, reissued in 1975 to become a Top 20 hit in the US and a chart-topper in 11 countries), and Wind Beneath My Wings (1982).

He also had a trademark whistling ability, which he used to perform The Skye Boat Song in a duet with Des O'Connor, reaching the UK Top 10 in 1986.

Though he did not rack up chart hits as prolifically as the Beatles or Abba, his frequent TV and live appearances made him a household name in many countries. In the mid-1980s, he was acknowledged as Germany's most successful recording artist. He made several recordings in German, singing the lyrics phonetically since he could not speak the language.

He was never fashionable, but never out of fashion with his audience. When he recorded a song such as Green, Green Grass of Home, it lacked the drama of Tom Jones's version and his treatment of Song Sung Blue was homelier and more avuncular than Neil Diamond's original, but it all became Whittaker music.

Whittaker performing on Lulu's BBC television show in the early 1970s
MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

He liked to say he represented the "silent majority". He defined this as "the kind of person who when he marries becomes a parent and a taxpayer and devotes himself to bringing up his children properly - all in all, a pretty straight-down-the-line guy".

In the 70s, when rock music was dominating the record industry, Whittaker was dropped by his label, RCA, despite the fact that he had sold several million discs. He decided to market his 1977 album, All My Best, on TV. "I was the first act to go on TV with records," he said. All My Best sold nearly 1m copies.

Born in Nairobi, Kenya, he was the son of Vi (nee Showan) and Edward Whittaker, who had owned a grocery shop in Staffordshire, but moved to a farm near Thika after Edward sustained serious injuries in a motorcycle accident and had been advised that a hot, dry climate would aid his recuperation.

Edward developed a new grocery business, while Vi worked as a teacher. Roger, who could speak Swahili before he learned English, attended the Prince of Wales school (now Nairobi school). He had begun learning the guitar at seven.

> "I learned how to entertain in the clubs of the north-east of England, the clubs where the miners go

After school, where he had sung in the choir, he was called up for national service. He was posted to the Kenya Regiment, and for two years was involved in fighting the anti-colonial Mau Mau rebels. He subsequently attended the University of Cape Town to study medicine, but after 18 months he left and trained to be a teacher.

In 1959 he moved to Britain and enrolled at Bangor University in north Wales, where he studied zoology, biochemistry and marine biology. He also began to make his first moves into music, playing gigs to earn some cash and recording songs on flexi discs distributed with the university newspaper.

These provoked interest from Fontana records, and in 1962 his first single releases were The Charge of the Light Brigade and Steel Men.

He played concerts in Northern Ireland and appeared on the Ulster TV show This and That, and his career developed with constant touring around Britain.

"I learned how to entertain in the clubs of the north-east of England, the working men's clubs where the miners go," he said. In 1964 he married Natalie O'Brien.

By 1968 he was touring internationally and even had a TV showcase in the Soviet Union. At the 1968 Knokke song contest in Belgium, Whittaker performed If I Were a Rich Man, from the musical Fiddler on the Roof, and his own whistling composition, Mexican Whistler, helping Britain to win the competition, and both tunes were hits in France, the Netherlands and Belgium. In 1969 he scored his first UK Top 20 hit with Durham Town (the Leavin'), which reached No 12. Its easy-listening mixture of sentimentality and nostalgia, with its mournful references to war and bereavement, was typical of Whittaker's work.

He revisited his African background in the documentary film Roger Whittaker in Kenya: A Musical Safari (1982), and in 1986 he published his autobiography (written with his wife), So Far, So Good. Three years later, he received the news that his parents had been attacked by a gang of robbers in Kenya, leaving his father dead and his mother brutally beaten. She subsequently moved back to Britain.

Outside music, Whittaker had a shrewd eye for antiques. His collection of paintings, furniture and works of art was auctioned by Sotheby's in 1999 for more than £1m, at the same time as he sold his Herefordshire home and moved to Essex. Latterly he lived in the south of France.

He is survived by Natalie and by their five children, Emily, Lauren, Jessica, Guy and Alexander, 12 grandchildren, two great-grandchildren and his sister, Betty.

Adam Sweeting

Roger Henry Brough Whittaker, singer and songwriter, born 22 March 1936; died 13 September 2023

Other lives



Andrew Veal

Banker and special constable who became a prisons adviser, supporting former inmates in rehabilitation

My father, Andrew Veal, who has died aged 72, had careers in banking and prison rehabilitation, but his true passion was his voluntary work as a special constable in Suffolk (1978-2003). He achieved the rank of special inspector, became involved in the recruitment and retention of volunteers and also organised many training days.

Born in Sleaford, Lincolnshire, Andrew was the only son of Kitty (nee Burbidge) and Ray Veal, a shipping manager. After the family moved to Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk, he went to King Edward VI grammar school in the town.

Andrew's first job was as a trainee chartered surveyor at Parkyns estate agents, which he joined in 1972. There he met Suzanne Woricker and they married in 1976. He then moved on to Lacy Scott and Knight estate agents, also in Bury St Edmunds, before joining NatWest, where he would work for more than two decades (1975-2000), initially as a bank clerk but rising to be an assistant manager with oversight of its Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill branches.

He loved his time there, and it was while with NatWest that he began his parallel duties as a special constable. But in 2000 he decided on a career change and joined the Department for Work and Pensions as a disability employment and prisons adviser, supporting inmates through rehabilitation and helping them to find employment after release.

My father was always prudent with money, and it was this prudence that led to one of my happiest memories. One Christmas, I was given a hand-crafted wooden fire station - the result of hours my father had spent labouring away in his shed. It is now loved by my son.

He was also society-minded, donating more than 75 pints of blood during his lifetime. He was disappointed that, for health reasons, he was unable to bring that number up to 100. A few years after retiring in 2012 my parents moved to Stanningfield, where he enjoyed gardening and photography.

He is survived by Suzanne, their two children, Nicola and me, and four grandchildren.

Ben Veal

Nick Levinson

BBC television producer of Open University art history and architecture programming

My friend and former colleague Nick Levinson, who has died aged 80, was a pioneering TV producer of Open University (OU) arts programming with the BBC, who helped transform public and academic interest in western art history and architecture.

His work covered a range of subjects from the European Renaissance through to the contemporary art of First Nations Australia. For more than 50 years the inspirational impact of the OU and its programming has reached into every part of British society, and much of that success was due to the talent of the first generation of academics and producers. Nick retired in 1998, with 188 OU production credits to his name.

In the mid-1960s he worked in BBC music and arts as a researcher. When the OU was founded in 1969 and the BBC began recruiting staff, he joined the fledgling enterprise at Alexandra Palace to create, with academic colleagues at Milton Keynes, a new distance-learning experience using TV and radio.

Of the 22 OU arts courses on which Nick worked as BBC series producer, several, including history of architecture and design 1890-1939 (1975-1982), and modern art and modernism (1983-1992) are themselves now the subject of PhD theses.

Born in London, Nick was the son of Frank Levinson, a solicitor,



and Sylvia (nee Schloss), a keen pianist. He went to the progressive St Christopher school, Letchworth, then studied art history at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London. In 1966, just after he completed his BA, the River Arno in Florence burst its banks. Nick joined the army of volunteers that rushed to save what could be salvaged.

Nick married Deanna Hatcher, a production assistant at the BBC, in 1971, and they had two children, Selina and Charlie. Deanna died in 2022. His children and three grandchildren survive him.

Charles Cooper

Rita Austin

Dedicated social justice activist and first Asian woman to stand for the Labour party in St Albans

My wife, Rita Austin, who has died aged 82, was the first Asian woman to stand for the Labour party in St Albans, Hertfordshire, in 1983. Later, she founded the Welsh Refugee Council.

Rita attended Loreto House in Calcutta (now Kolkata) and Loreto Convent in Darjeeling before arriving in England, in 1955, where she continued her secondary education at Loreto college in St Albans. She then studied for a year (1960-61) at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. During this time, Rita and I met, at Fircroft College, Birmingham, where I was studying economics, politics and English. We were married in 1962 and had two children.

She went on to take a diploma in public and social administration at Swansea University (1963-65), a BA in economics, politics and sociology at Birmingham University (1966-68), and a PhD at the University of Wales, Cardiff (1972-76). Her doctorate promoted advanced nursing education and developed the concept of nurse practitioners.

Rita taught in a variety of institutions before embarking on a career in public service, including roles as a registrar at the Council for National Academic Awards (1977-83), director of South Glamorgan Race Equality Council (1989-93), and assistant chief executive for equalities and the third sector at Bristol city council (1993-95).

In the mid-1960s, Rita joined the Birmingham Northfield parliamentary constituency. For the 1983 general election, Labour selected her to stand for the party in St Albans. The family then returned to Cardiff and, in 1985, she became South Glamorgan county council's first Asian county councillor and was chair of its finance committee. At this time, Rita also was part of the Labour party's working group on Black sections alongside Paul Boateng, Diane Abbott and Bernie Grant.

As a councillor, she was an active member of the local health and police authorities and the Welsh joint education committee. In 1992, she founded and became the first chair of the Welsh Refugee Council. She was also chair of the South Wales Citizens Advice bureaux.

Her forensic articulacy and strong will were not always welcomed within or outside the Labour party, but her pioneering efforts paved the way for others.

Her final job, from 1995 to 1997, was as chief executive of CareerPaths - now Careers Wales - (Cardiff and Vale), which she set up as a newly constituted organisation before retiring. In retirement she continued to promote social justice



in a variety of public appointments, notably in health, education and local government.

Born in Calcutta, Rita was the daughter of Nirmala (nee Ghosal), a teacher and translator who died in 1969, and Niren De, who was attorney general of India from 1968 to 1977. Rita grew up in an India still in the throes of ethnic and social discrimination, which instigated a lifetime spent resisting and fighting all forms of social injustice.

Rita is survived by me, our children, Paul and Sarah, and grandson, Tomos.

Tony Austin

Su Gorman

Campaigner for the thousands who contracted hepatitis and HIV after being given infected blood products

My friend Su Gorman, who has died aged 68 of heart failure, was a campaigner for haemophiliac victims of Britain's contaminated blood scandal. Her work with her husband, Steve Dymond, as part of the pressure group Tainted Blood, did much to bring about the inquiry established in 2018 to explore why people in the UK were given infected blood and blood products.

In the 1970s and 80s, 4,689 British people with haemophilia and other bleeding disorders became infected with hepatitis C (as Steve did) and/or HIV after being treated with contaminated blood products. Of those, more than 3,000 have since died.

Su was small, fierce, clever, angry and driven. She was also warm and funny, but many only saw the erudite, ferocious side. She had the most piercing blue eyes - beautiful in themselves, but terrifying when focused on the politicians and senior NHS staff she blamed for the scandal.

Born in London, she was the daughter of Betsy Cowling, a legal secretary, and Terence Gorman, an engineer for London Transport, and went to Mayfield comprehensive school in Putney. She met Steve at Exeter University, where they both studied Russian.

In the 80s they unofficially adopted Ken Johnson, a homeless 16-year-old. To their great pride he went on to become the youngest headteacher in Lewisham.

Steve was a mild haemophiliac, able to live a full life until infected with contaminated blood product. After contracting hepatitis C in the mid-80s - though it was not diagnosed until 1997 - he became lethargic, forgetful, distant and suffered a number of shocking bleeds.

Su gave up her job as a senior social worker to look after Steve and fight for justice. She was a walking encyclopedia of dates and documents that exposed terrible failings. Apart from seeking an admission that the policy of buying cheap, contaminated blood (largely from US prisons) had killed thousands of people in the UK, the fight was also for compensation. It left Su and Steve impecunious because they could no longer work.

I first met them in 2017, just after the then prime minister, Theresa May, announced a statutory public inquiry. We spent hours talking in a pub in Ramsgate in Kent, where they lived, as they explained the



scandal's myriad complexities. After the inquiry began in early 2018, Su appeared with Steve on radio and TV shows to talk about the impact of the scandal.

In December 2018 Steve died of total organ failure, aged 62. Su continued to fight, regularly attending the inquiry despite increasing ill health and giving testimony that was blistering and heartbreaking. She moved to Dawlish in Devon, where she lived in a static caravan at Golden Sands holiday park, enjoying the natural beauty and being close to where Steve was buried.

Last year the government made an interim compensation payment of £100,000 to each of those who had been infected, and to bereaved partners. But Su died before publication of the final report and any decision had been made about the final compensation - a heroic campaigner, but ultimately another victim of this shameful scandal.

Simon Hattenstone

Birthdays

Ian Albery, impresario, 87; **Sir Curtly Ambrose**, cricketer, 60; **Marcus Binney**, architectural historian, 79; **Jerry Bruckheimer**, film producer, 80; **Charles Clarke**, former Labour MP and cabinet minister, 73; **Shirley Conran**, novelist, 91; **Vicky Ford**, Conservative MP, 56; **Liam Gallagher**, rock singer, 51; **Rose Garrard**, sculptor and mixed media artist, 77; **Chris Gayle**, cricketer, 44; **Faith Hill**, singer, 56; **Nyree Kindred**, Paralympic swimmer, 43; **Stephen King**, novelist, 76; **Simon Mayo**, broadcaster and author, 65; **Bill Murray**, actor, 73; **Tadej Pogačar**, cyclist, 25; **Ben Proud**, swimmer, 29; **Kevin Rudd**, former prime minister of Australia, 66; **Graham Southern**, art gallery owner, 63; **Joe Wicks**, personal trainer and TV presenter, 38; **David Williams**, former chief executive, UK Space Agency, 72.

Puzzles

Yesterday's solutions

Killer sudoku
Easy

5	3	6	8	4	9	2	7	1
7	1	9	3	2	6	8	4	5
8	4	2	5	1	7	9	6	3
2	8	1	7	6	3	5	9	4
4	6	5	9	8	2	3	1	7
9	7	3	4	5	1	6	2	8
1	5	8	2	9	4	7	3	6
6	2	7	1	3	5	4	8	9
3	9	4	6	7	8	1	5	2

Medium

2	5	7	8	1	3	9	4	6
6	8	1	9	4	5	7	2	3
3	9	4	7	6	2	1	8	5
4	6	2	3	7	1	5	9	8
1	3	8	5	2	9	4	6	7
5	7	9	4	8	6	2	3	1
8	4	3	1	9	7	6	5	2
7	2	5	6	3	4	8	1	9
9	1	6	2	5	8	3	7	4

Codeword

■	P	■	C	■	L	■	P	U	R	I	S	M
G	E	L	A	T	I	N	E	■	A	■	H	■
■	E	■	N	■	B	■	N	■	Z	O	O	M
■	L	O	D	G	I	N	G	■	E	■	W	■
■	E	■	Y	■	D	■	U	N	S	E	E	N
G	R	O	T	T	O	■	I	■	■	■	R	■
■	■	■	U	■	■	■	N	■	A	X	E	D
■	J	■	F	U	C	H	S	I	A	■	D	■
V	O	L	T	■	O	■	■	■	R	■	■	■
■	U	■	■	■	L	■	M	O	D	E	M	S
A	S	S	A	I	L	■	U	■	V	■	E	■
■	T	■	B	■	O	V	E	R	A	C	T	■
M	E	S	H	■	Q	■	S	■	R	■	T	■
■	R	■	O	■	U	N	L	I	K	E	L	Y
A	S	T	R	A	Y	■	I	■	S	■	E	■

Cryptic crossword
Solution No. 29,180

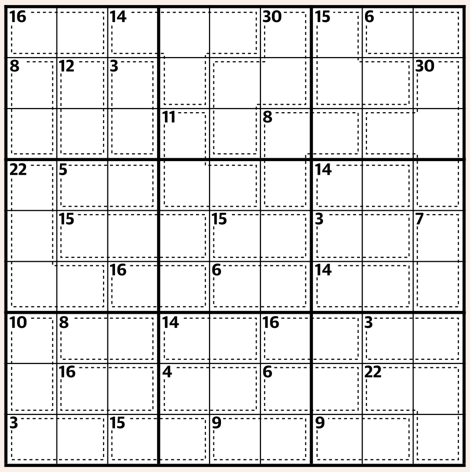
S	A	M	O	V	A	R	■	P	L	U	M	M	E	T
P	■	A	■	I	■	E	■	L	■	N	■	A	■	E
R	O	G	U	E	M	A	L	E	■	D	I	R	E	R
I	■	E	■	W	■	R	■	A	■	E	■	T	■	R
G	A	N	G	■	L	I	P	S	E	R	V	I	C	E
■	■	T	■	B	■	T	■	U	■	S	■	N	■	N
■	C	A	R	E	S	S	■	R	E	C	L	A	M	E
■	■	■	■	R	■	U	■	E	■	O	■	■	■	■
B	U	S	K	I	N	G	■	G	A	R	I	S	H	■
E	■	H	■	B	■	L	■	R	■	E	■	T	■	■
E	N	I	D	B	L	Y	T	O	N	■	W	R	A	P
C	■	A	■	O	■	H	■	U	■	T	■	I	■	I
H	I	T	O	N	■	E	I	N	D	H	O	V	E	N
E	■	S	■	E	■	A	■	D	■	O	■	E	■	C
S	T	U	D	D	E	D	■	S	Q	U	I	N	C	H

Stuck? For help call **0906 200 83 83**. Calls cost £1.10 per minute, plus your phone company's access charge. Service supplied by ATS. Call **0330 333 6946** for customer service (charged at standard rate). **Want more?** Get access to more than 4,000 puzzles at **theguardian.com/crossword**. To buy puzzle books, visit **guardianbookshop.com** or call **0330 333 6846**.*

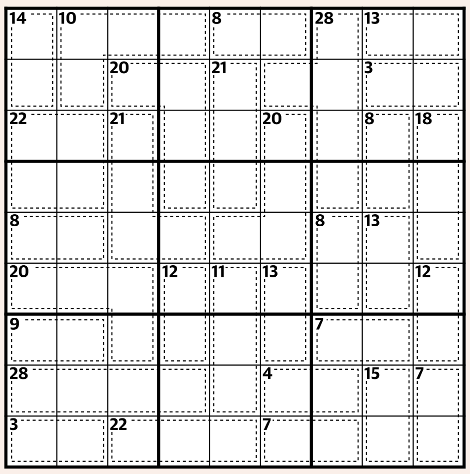
Killer sudoku

Easy

The normal rules of Sudoku apply: fill each row, column and 3x3 box with all the numbers from 1 to 9. In addition, the digits in each inner shape (marked by dots) must add up to the number in the top corner of that box. No digit can be repeated within an inner shape.



Medium



Codeword

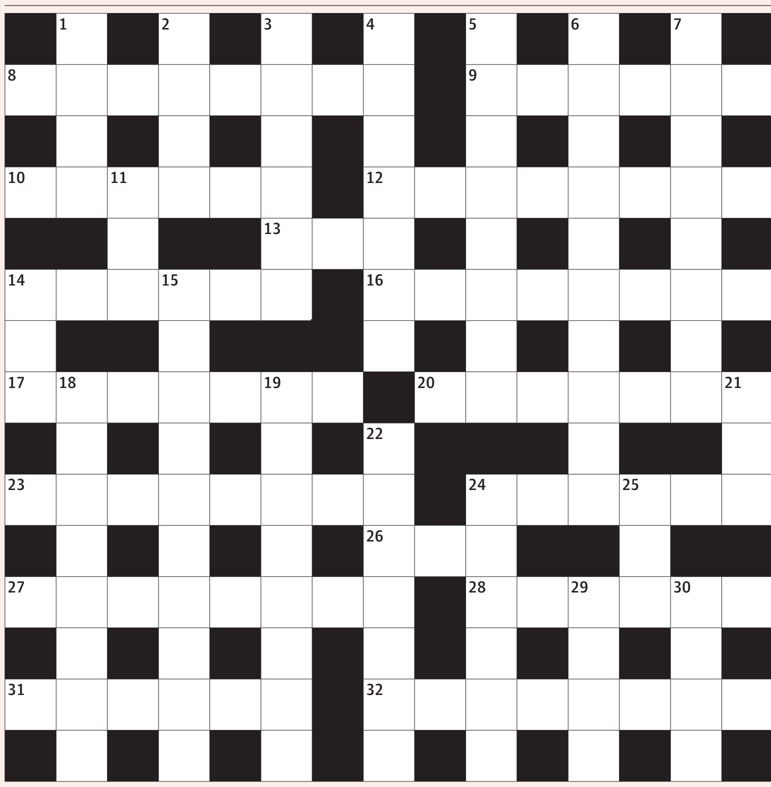
Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid, and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid.

24	23	25	22	26	■	13	14	9	10	26	24	■
12	■	19	■	20	■	26	■	3	■	20	■	2
21	3	16	3	9	8	3	■	13	14	21	26	14
25	■	25	■	22	■	26	■	9	■	22	■	4
2	25	3	12	21	26	13	24	■	16	26	26	3
■	■	26	■	24	■	■	9	■	9 O	■	■	1
8	4	13	24	■	1	14	25	11	11	4	13 T	4
9	■	■	25	■	25	■	5	■	13	■	■	3
2	14	4	1	23	13	19	17	■	25	1	9	1
2	■	■	25	■	26	■	■	22	■	21	■	■
19	9	13	24	■	24	5	14	4	13	18	26	14
4	■	26	■	24	■	25	■	15	■	18	■	9
3	17	6	5	23	■	10	4	13	25	19	19	17
1	■	5	■	4	■	26	■	21	■	26	■	25
■	7	9	4	3	26	22	■	6	9	14	26	19

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N ~~O~~ P Q R S ~~T~~ U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 O	10	11	12	13 T
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Guardian cryptic crossword No 29,181 set by Fed



Across

8 Introduction to Pointless, with tips from Alexander Armstrong, maybe identifying idiom (8)
9 Help whistleblower to frame story (6)
10 Total number who've paid in gold to get cake (6)
12 Not guilty — meaning prisoner returned for the first time (8)
13 Bed and breakfast's closing after business (3)
14 Two TVs and a collection of DVDs? (3,3)
16 Had enough — county town's wanting street theatre banned conclusively (8)
17 Shy Matt emptied pockets (7)
20 New side, after old team get rusty (7)
23 I guess I'd supply camouflage (8)
24 American — nearly 21, say — ultimately still lacking principles (6)
26 Rest pot on the counter (3)
27 Sewers using fine line for edges of cloth trousers (8)
28 Father's shaking up Sprite (6)
31 A brilliant discovery! Brussels are amazingly full of potassium (6)
32 One has several options as a muscle car's punctured tyre at the finish (1,2,5)

Down

1 Somewhere to go over adult 'hot stuff' (4)
2 Succulent drink gets round in (4)
3 Admit in court, taking drug occasionally (6)
4 Type of thermometer I inserted for show (7)
5 Managed small repair after using last bit of Pritt Stick (8)
6 Doctor, I croak with cold — one's often seen at the bedside (5,5)
7 Covering for Morecambe and Wise after finally opening for star turns (8)
11 Every now and then Manx cat's tail begins to stretch (3)
14 Supporter of British artist (3)
15 Stock well-known baker's cake ingredient? (4,6)
18 Experiment starts in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 — go! (5,3)
19 Ancient vampire bats left (8)
21 Swimmer's initially excited by terms of the deal (3)
22 This might stop photos being taken of crude lap dances, once lawyer's disappeared (4,3)
24 Beg group that wants to stay dry to carry masks etc over lake (6)
25 Some theory about eggs (3)
29 Device's international power plug (4)
30 In audition, refer to setting (4)